



GREAT NOVELISTS.

SCOTT

THACKERAY

DICKENS

LYTTON.

BY

JAMES CRABB WATT.

1

"Biography is by nature the most universally profitable, universally pleasant, of all things, especially Biography of distinguished individuals."—Carlyle.



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PREFACE.

NEITHER this book nor the series of which it forms a part pretends to any higher claim than to be a concise epitome of the lives which it recounts, designed for those whom youth, business, disinclination, or lack of opportunity prevents perusing long biographies, but who nevertheless desire, as shortly as may be, to know what those great men were, what they did, and how they did it. The design being purely personal, criticism is introduced only to give a more complete presentation of the subjects, and the lessons they teach, and to illustrate, embellish, or vary the narrative. We are sanguine that such an effort will be found to be of use by those among whom it is believed to be most desiderated—from schoolboys who have little more than read their first novel to business-men whose exacting occupations leave scanty leisure for the pursuit of knowledge.

J. C. W.

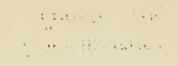
Edinburgh, ist October 1879.

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SIR WALTER SCOTT.*

One day as he walked out to Craigcrook, his seat near Edinburgh, Francis Jeffrey, the ablest critic of his time, wrapped himself in monumental reflections, and with the *stylus* of thought inscribed these words upon an imaginary tablet:—

"This graven plate, deposited in the base of a votive building on the fifteenth day of August, in the year of Christ 1840, and destined never to see the light again, till the surrounding structures are crumbled to dust by the decay of time, or by human or elemental violence, may then testify to a distant posterity that the citizens of Edinburgh began on that day to raise an effigy and an architectural monument to the memory of Sir Walter Scott; whose admirable writings were then allowed to have given more delight and suggested better feelings to a larger class of readers in every rank of society than those of any other author, with the exception of Shakspere alone: and which, therefore, were thought likely to be remembered long after this act of gratitude, on the part of the first generation of his admirers, should be forgotten."

The Scott Memorial Committee, who had already applied to Jeffrey in vain, heard of this striking composition and adopted it as their epitaph of the man

* We gladly acknowledge our obligations to Mr Lockhart's famous Life of Scott (A. & C. Black, Edinburgh), and Archibald Constable's Literary Correspondence (Edmonston & Douglas, Edinburgh), for the facts on which this sketch is based.

whose career we desire now to trace in his three great aspects of a genius, a worker, and a failure.

Sir Waiter Scott says of himself that he was of gentle birth, that is to say, the stock of which he sprang was of some antiquity and local renown; but like many Scotch families who trace their descent from Thanes, or remotely connect themselves with chieftains, Scott's family inherited poverty with its pedigree. great-grandfather, Walter Scott, second son of the Laird of Raeburn, though only manager of the estate of Makerstoun, was a friend of Dr Pitcairn, the first physician of his time, and used to talk politics with him in Latin, at a Jacobite club in Edinburgh. rowly escaped hanging for fighting at Killiecrankie for the Stuarts; and so sorely did he take their exile to heart that he ceased to shave, and along with an elaborate beard which this abstinence grew, acquired the nickname of Beardie. Beardie, whose grandfather was auld Watt of Harden, an ancient Border chief often celebrated in minstrelsy, had a son Robert, who intended to follow fortune on the sea; but being shipwrecked near Dundee on his first voyage, he resolved to quit that stormy career, got a farm from Harden, and stocked it with a loan of £30 from the shepherd whom he had engaged. There was a gambling spirit in him as well as in his illustrious descendant, Sir Walter, for with the £,30 he bought a horse at a fair, which he subsequently "couped" at a meet of hounds for £,60. By his wife Barbara Halliburton, "daughter of an ancient and respectable family in Berwickshire," he had a son Walter Scott, born in 1729, who was educated to the profession of a Writer to the Signet in Edinburgh. This gentleman, who became the novelist's father, was of the strictest order of Calvinists, fond of the archæology of the law, and a stickler for forms, not only at Courts, but at christenings and funerals —which latter, decked out in all the sombre garniture of grief, it is said he absolutely loved. Nevertheless, so excellent was the character of this man, that the author of the song "I've seen the smiling of Fortune beguiling," Mrs Cockburn, in summing up his virtues, declared that he might hear the last trump without dread of detection. His wife was a daughter of the Professor of Medicine in the University of Edinburgh, Dr John Rutherfurd, and she, in addition to the maternal virtues, possessed a superior mind, coupled with the fine and quaint breeding of the ancient Caledonian gentilesse. "In her eightieth year she took as much care to avoid touching her chair with her back, as if she had still been under the stern eyes of Mrs Ogilvy," a rigorous finisher, who died in 1753, and was supposed to be the best bred woman of her time.

That Mrs Scott was also a woman of an inquiring, not to say inquisitive turn of mind, this anecdote testifies:-"Mrs Scott's curiosity was strongly excited one autumn by the regular appearance, at a certain hour every evening, of a sedan chair, to deposit a person carefully muffled up in a mantle, who was immediately ushered into her husband's private room, and commonly remained with him there until long after the usual bed-time of this orderly family. Mr Scott answered her repeated inquiries with a vagueness which irritated the lady's feelings more and more; until, at last, she could bear the thing no longer; but one evening, just as she heard the bell ring as for the stranger's chair to carry him off, she made her appearance within the forbidden parlour with a salver in her hand, observing, that she thought the gentlemen had sat so long, they would be the better of a dish of tea, and had ventured accordingly to bring some for

their acceptance. The stranger, a person of distinguished appearance, and richly dressed, bowed to the lady, and accepted a cup; but her husband knit his brows, and refused very coldly to partake the refreshment. A moment afterwards the visitor withdrew—and Mr Scott lifting up the window-sash, took the cup, which he had left empty on the table, and tossed it out upon the pavement. The lady exclaimed for her china, but was put to silence by her husband's saying, 'I can forgive your little curiosity, madam, but you must pay the penalty. I may admit into my house, on a piece of business, persons wholly unworthy to be treated as guests by my wife. Neither lip of me nor of mine comes after Mr Murray of Broughton's.'"*

Mr Scott and his wife had a family of twelve, only five of whom survived childhood. Of this family, Robert, who was in most of Rodney's battles, and had a poetical turn, with which he amused his mates, died in the East India Company's service, to which he had been driven by the peace of 1783. John died a young soldier in 1816; and Thomas, who was of a humorous bent, practised the law, but had to give it up through unfortunate

* The anecdote proceeds:—"This was the unhappy man who, after attending Prince Charles Stuart as his secretary throughout the greater part of his expedition, condescended to redeem his own life and fortune by bearing evidence against the noblest of his late master's adherents, when

' Pitied by gentle hearts Kilmarnock died— The brave, Balmerino, were on thy side,'

When confronted with Sir John Douglas of Kelhead (ancestor of the Marquess of Queensberry), before the Privy Council in St James's, the prisoner was asked, 'Do you know this witness?' 'Not I,' answered Douglas; 'I once knew a person who bore the designation of Murray of Broughton—but that was a gentleman and a man of honour, and one that could hold up his head!'"

speculations with which he had no business; he afterwards became paymaster to the 70th Regiment, and died in Canada. Daniel, the disgrace of the family, had neither talent nor industry—a sort of rolling stone, with a brain which could neither work nor invent, nor even scheme. He died on his return from the West Indies, where, true to his luck, or his habit, he had been unsuccessful. Anne Scott, the novelist's only sister, was a poor, if somewhat peevish, sufferer. After having her hand mangled between a hasp and staple, and then being nearly drowned in a quarry hole, she was the victim of a still greater misfortune. When only six years of age her cap took fire, and the consequent scorching of her head induced recurrent swellings and an extreme delicacy of constitution, of which she ultimately died at still an early age.

WALTER, the greatest of his house, was born on the 15th August 1771—also the birthday of Napoleon—at the head of the College Wynd in the city of Edinburgh, not far from the scene of Darnley's murder, and almost within the very sanctuary of learning itself-the house where he first saw the light being demolished to make way for the north wall of the University. In childhood, the evil fate of his sister seems to have attacked him; for he was lamed for life by a teething fever; he escaped consumption through a consumptive nurse; and when at the age of two or three he was sent to Sandyknowe, his grandfather's farm in Berwickshire, to see if nature would work upon his limbs what neither empirics nor the precriptions of Dr Rutherfurd could accomplish, his maid, "under strong temptation of the Devil," was strangely prompted to cut his throat with a scissors, and bury him in the moss.

From these latter dangers, however, he escaped scathe-

less; and in the autobiography which he never was able to finish, and which from his special faculty of storytelling, would have been of unparalleled interest had it been completed, Scott thus describes the fate which then impended over him:--"It seems my mother had sent a maid to take charge of me, that I might be no inconvenience in the family. But the damsel sent on that important mission had left her heart behind her, in the keeping of some wild fellow, it is likely, who had done and said more to her than he was like to make good. She became extremely desirous to return to Edinburgh, and as my mother made a point of her remaining where she was, she contracted a sort of hatred at poor me, as the cause of her being detained at Sandyknowe. This rose, I suppose, to a sort of delirious affection, for she confessed to old Alison Wilson, the housekeeper, that she had carried me up to the Craigs, meaning under a strong temptation of the Devil, to cut my throat with her scissors, and bury me in the moss. Alison instantly took possession of my person, and took care that her confidant should not be subject to any farther temptation, so far as I was concerned. She was dismissed, of course, and I have heard became afterwards a lunatic "

Every effort was strained at this rural retreat for the restoration of the disabled limb. Among other remedies tried he was wrapped in the skin of a newly flayed sheep, which, it was believed, contained some hidden elixir under the wool. "It is here," he says, "at Sandyknowe, in the residence of my paternal grandfather, already mentioned, that I have the first consciousness of existence; and I recollect distinctly that my situation and appearance were a little whimsical. Among the odd remedies recurred to aid my

lameness, some one had recommended, that so often as a sheep was killed for the use of the family, I should be stripped, and swathed up in the skin, warm as it was flayed from the carcase of the animal. In this Tartar-like habiliment I well remember lying upon the floor of the little parlour in the farm-house, while my grandfather, a venerable old man with white hair, used every excitement to make me try to crawl. I also distinctly remember the late Sir George MacDougal of Makerstoun, father of the present Sir Henry Hay MacDougal, joining in this kindly attempt. He was, God knows how, a relation of ours, and I still recollect him in his old-fashioned military habit (he had been colonel of the Greys), with a small cocked hat deeply laced, an embroidered scarlet waistcoat, and a light-coloured coat, with milk-white locks tied in a military fashion, kneeling on the ground before me, and dragging his watch along the carpet to induce me to follow it."

But neither wool nor elixir proved effectual. Walter remained one of the halt—albeit a strong one—till his bones were stretched in that part of Dryburgh Abbey which was once the inheritance of Barbara Halliburton's family. However, the hill air, the country diet, and the exercise to which impatience impelled him, put new life into the child, who gradually waxed active, bold, and strong; and with his greed of exercise in after years he developed into a comparatively robust man, fond of all manner of life and healthy recreation.

In his fourth year he was transported to Bath, where it was hoped the baths might rid him of his dreary decrepitude. But hydropathics were as ineffectual as previous prescriptions had been, and the only advantage he may be said to have received at Bath was the exhilaration which a series of novelties in scenery, customs, and characters awoke. Here also his education commenced. He received a quarter's instruction from a dame-teacher, an old lady whom he considered to be as regular a teacher as he ever had, and sundry lessons from the aunt who had charge of him, Miss Janet Scott. He had been quick in the uptake about the sheep at Sandyknowe, and knew the names of such as had them; but it is not said that he was an apt scholar either at Bath or in Edinburgh, where he afterwards received his complement of the elements from a Mr Stalker, and a schoolmaster in holy orders.

With the exception of some weeks at Prestonpans, where he was sent to absorb the salubrity of the sea, and another season at Sandyknowe, beside which the tower of Smailholm, celebrated in "The Eve of St John," stands, he now remained at home in Edinburgh, where the change from the petted grandchild to the cripple of a household would have been unbearable, but for the sympathy and partiality of a cultured mother. Swedenborg says the child takes its brain from the father and its heart from the mother; and in Scott's case, though the father was neither a fossil nor a Pharisee, it must be confessed he imbibed more from the soft, light, poetic, and devout nature of his mother, than from his father's dry law and cold theology.

He was sent to the High School in 1778; and with that the chronicle of his uneventful infancy may be said to end. Miss Cockburn says, that at the age of six, he was the greatest genius she ever saw; but there is no ground for supposing that beyond a retentive memory and a certain precocity in reciting, he was anything but an ordinary child. His most enduring impressions were received at Sandyknowe, where, being the "only brat," he was believed to have a sweetness about him which we

presume would have been seen in any other girlish face so placed as to become the only possible pet of a grandame's household. It was there that he learned to admire, and, as we shall see, to hate; it was there that his imaginative faculty was called into play; it was there that his sense of the grandeur and beauty of nature was awakened. Even her terrors appealed to his young emotions, for we find him lying on an exposed hillside and greeting each flash of lightning with the exclamation, "Bonny! bonny!" The sort of life he led in that remote region, and the whirl of sensations and susceptibilities in which he began to feel his soul mingle, are thus described in the introduction to the third canto of "Marmion:"—

"Thus, while I ape the measure wild Of tales that charmed me yet a child, Rude though they be, still with the chime Return the thoughts of early time: And feelings, roused in life's first day, Glow in the line, and prompt the lay. Then rise those crags, that mountain tower, Which charmed my fancy's wakening hour: Though no broad river swept along, To claim, perchance, heroic song; Though sighed no groves in summer gale, To prompt of love a softer tale: Though scarce a puny streamlet's speed Claimed homage from a shepherd's reed, Yet was poetic impulse given, By the green hill and clear blue heaven. It was a barren scene, and wild, Where naked cliffs were rudely piled; But ever and anon between Lay velvet tufts of loveliest green : And well the lonely infant knew Recesses where the wall-flower grew,

And honevsuckle loved to crawl Up the low crag and ruined wall. I deemed such nooks the sweetest shade The sun in all his round surveyed; And still I thought that shattered tower The mightiest work of human power; And marvelled, as the aged hind With some strange tale bewitched my mind Of forayers, who, with headlong force, Down from that strength had spurred their horse, Their southern rapine to renew, Far in the distant Cheviot's blue, And, home returning, filled the hall With revel, wassel-rout, and brawl.-Methought that still with tramp and clang The gateway's broken arches rang: Methought grim features, seamed with scars, Glared through the windows' rusty bars. And ever, by the winter hearth, Old tales I heard of woe or mirth, Of lovers' slights, of ladies' charms, Of witches' spells, of warriors' arms; Of patriot battles, won of old By Wallace wight and Bruce the bold; Of later fields of feud and fight, When, pouring from their Highland height, The Scottish clans, in headlong sway, Had swept the scarlet ranks away. While stretched at length upon the floor, Again I fought each combat o'er, Pebbles and shells, in order laid, The mimic ranks of war displayed; And onward still the Scottish Lion bore, And still the scattered Southron fled before.

"Still, with vain fondness, could I trace, Anew, each kind familiar face, That brightened at our evening fire; From the thatched mansion's grey-haired Sire, Wise without learning, plain and good, And sprung of Scotland's gentler blood; Whose eye, in age, quick, clear, and keen, Showed what in youth its glance had been; Whose doom discording neighbours sought, Content with equity unbought; To him the venerable Priest, Our frequent and familiar guest, Whose life and manners well could paint Alike the student and the saint; Alas! whose speech too oft I broke With gambol rude and timeless joke; For I was wayward, bold, and wild, A self-willed imp, a grandame's child; But half a plague and half a jest, Was still endured, beloved, caressed."

Of a winning and cheerful nature, Scott seems to have deserved the partiality of his kinsfolk at Sandyknowe, no less than the warm praise which his tutor afterwards gave him, "that he seldom had occasion to find fault with him, even for trifles, and only once to threaten serious castigation, of which he was no sooner aware than he suddenly sprang up, threw his arms about my neck and kissed me." Evidently an impulsive and warm-hearted child, who grew "great-hearted" at the rebuke of love; but also capable of fury-occasional delinquency, as when he flew at the throat of the laird of Raeburn for "thrawing" the neck of a starling, and was torn from him with no little difficulty. That was not any less the deed of a generous nature because it was naughty; he was much more culpable, however, in the mean trick he played upon a classfellow of whom he could not get the better in fair fight, by cutting off a button which the lad was always observed to twirl at his lesson, and thereby disconcerting him.

The friends who were keen to detect the dawning of his powers, early perceived a grasping but somewhat fickle memory, which would retain only what struck his fancy. Of fairy tales, border raids, and family traditions, as he indicates in those lines, he never lost hold, and in after-years they trooped smoothly from their retreats at his command. Numerous examples are recorded of the capacity of his memory. When in London on his way to Bath, the impressions left on his mind by the sights there, he found in after-years to be as accurate as they were vivid. At Prestonpans he met a military veteran, by name Dalgetty, who having been in most of the German wars, loquaciously recounted the feats of arms which lived in his own recollection, and, we suspect, in his imagination. Walter took the liveliest interest in the battles and adventures through which the captain had passed, and in the days of his prolific power skilfully wove his experiences into one of his most humorous though somewhat tiresome characters.

Allied with this capacious memory, there was precocity of perception, prejudice and taste. For instance, while under the tuition of his kinsfolk at Sandyknowe, he imbibed a hatred, of wondrous intensity for a child, of Washington and Cumberland. There, too, listening with intentness to fascinating songs and tales of the Stuarts, he acquired the rudiments of his Jacobitish tendencies. Even then his fancy was kindled, as his mind was filled, with the traditions of the Border—a land "rough indeed, yet breeds a generous race," as the Greek poet said of Ithaca. Watt of Harden, Wight Willie of Dodhead, the Deil of Little Dean, &c., figured as powerful heroes in his budding imagination, just as Orlando Furioso did in Thackeray's. Before he went to Bath he had learnt his letters, and his kind aunt having taught him to put them

together, the first volumes on which his skill was exercised, were "Ramsay's Miscellany," and the "Wars of the Jews."

In his home in George Square, along with the other members of the family, he was subjected to the rigour of the Presbyterian discipline. Against the strictness of those religious observances he has recorded his protest. For instance, he thought the Sabbath made the house melancholy; and that the day which should have been most joyous was made the most tedious. Then, his Sunday reading was limited to "Rowe's Letters," Gesner's "Death of Abel," and the "Pilgrim's Progress;" a narrow and injudicious restriction which he felt all the more because his mother had taught him the beauties of Pope and other classics, passages from which he could repeat with proper expression, and even passion, at the age of six. Nevertheless, though the house from its strictness bore a bleak aspect, and his ethical father a cold air, it would be folly to assert that these stringencies to which he had to submit had no beautifying or invigorating influence on his mind. It is true he was an Episcopalian all his days—at least all his thinking days; but it was just as impossible for him to resist the moulding of a vigorous and knotty religious system as to stand in miller's dust and not be "blanched." The thing which thus operated upon him was that hardening and consolidating influence which has its greatest growth among men who reason out, and do not blindly accept, what they believe. He lived in a country which made the study of the Scripture one of its chief pursuits, and whose very peasants seemed to exist for the sake of storing up within themselves a Biblical commentary on which their thirsty souls might draw whenever their adversaries beset them—commentaries by no means

contemptible, any more than their uncouth dialect breathed anything but the most fervent piety.

But all this by the way. Every Scotchman, we may be pardoned for saying, is grossly tainted with the reasoning faculty. The "caution" with which he is so often twitted, is merely the operation of an exuberant personal force which has come to be a national trait, and which he can no more help than Burns could help loving men and especially women, plovers, mice, and silly sheep, or any more than Sir Walter himself could help tenderly regarding the ewes on Sandyknowe, when he used to lie on his back among them, looking at them or the blue sky. At the same time, passionate and regardless as in some matters Burns was, he owned himself partial to the proofs of the "awful and important realities that a God made all things, man's immaterial and immortal nature, and a world of weal or woe beyond death and the grave;" and certainly there was no better "thrashing-floor for Logic, whereon all questions from the doctrine of rent to the natural history of religion are thrashed and rifled with the same mechanical impartiality," than Scotland then was or now is. The impressions which Presbyterianism leave on the mind, though severe, impart real strength and integrity to it; and when its doctrines deepen to conviction, we know of no system which has adherents so obstinately loyal, or characters so robust and active.

The High School of Edinburgh, where he remained for the next six years, "had long been the most celebrated establishment of the kind in the country."* He was first put under the care of a Mr Luke Fraser, "a good Latin scholar, and a very worthy man," who from three successive classes in four years, turned out Walter Scott, Francis Jeffrey, and Henry Brougham.

^{*} Cockburn's "Life of Jeffrey."

At home Walter and his brothers had the benefit of a private tutor, a Mr James Mitchell, who was destined for the kirk, and with whom he sustained many discussions on church history and divinity. As Walter was a cavalier and a Tory, and the tutor a Whig and a Presbyterian, they had some scope for polemics, but these were always amicably waged between them, excepting when Scott found himself hardly pressed by the superior logic of his opponent, and then he would indulge in some inelegant arguments, but the temper was speedily quenched and the debate ended by a burst of tears and a rush at the tutor's neck—a circumstance which, more than anything else recorded of him, shows his placability and generous disposition.

At school Scott never attained the distinction which his friend Jeffrey did after him. "He glanced like a meteor from one end of the class to the other, and disgusted his master as much by negligence and frivolity as he occasionally pleased him by flashes of intellect and talent." The pageantry of the Latin tongue, for instance, was not gorgeous enough to attract him, and even though he had been grounded in it long before by his first tutor Mr French, his efforts to acquire it were quite desultory as long as he was under Mr Fraser's care. Among the scholars, however, he was a decided favourite, and that because of the immense fund of preternatural tales and historical and miscellaneous knowledge which he poured forth with the steady flow of a deep stream.

This aptitude for the marvellous, in which he confessed he remained a child to the very last, was among the first discovered symptoms of his power, and of course his mother was the first to perceive it. It was her custom to make him read to her some of the finest of Homer's passages—for she seems to have been a woman of

remarkably good taste—and to teach him where to lay the pathos, or the force; but she found that his impatience for the warlike and tumultuous passages was so great that he could hardly be constrained to examine anything so lame and spiritless as declamation or figure. He readily got his favourite scenes by heart, and astonished the solitudes he haunted by reciting them aloud to the rocks and the winds, after the fashion of Demosthenes. His companions he entertained with none of these Homeric passages, which they probably knew as well as he, but rather with the curiosities of demonology and witchcraft which he had scraped together. "In the winter play hours," he says, "when hard exercise was impossible. my tales used to assemble an admiring audience round Lucky Brown's fire-side, and happy was he that would sit next to the inexhaustible narrator. I was also, though often negligent of my own tasks, always ready to assist my friends, and hence I had a little party of staunch partisans and adherents, stout of hand and heart. though somewhat dull of head,—the very tools for raising a hero to eminence, so on the whole, I made a brighter figure in the yards than in the class." Of the High School Life of those days, in which he took part, Mr Lockhart says, some capital illustrations are afforded in the story of Greenbreeks, and other passages in the general preface to the Waverley Novels.

After being three years with Mr Fraser, he entered the class of the Rector, Dr Adam, a man of strong discernment,—who, by the way, ought to be as memorable for the words with which he made his exit from this world, as for his distinction as a teacher. "It grows dark," he said, "the boys may dismiss." This schoolmaster, with his quick pedagogic perception, observed that although Walter was far from perfect as a Latin grammarian, yet

he could follow and enjoy the author's meaning much better than his class-fellows. The distinction with which he thus clothed him, spurred Walter on to further attainment, and by-and-by he became abundantly sensible of the beauty of the language, and tolerably familiar with Cæsar, Livy, and Sallust; Virgil, Horace, and Terence. Some time subsequently, he was greatly aided in his studies at Kelso, to which town he was sent to spend six months for the sake of his health, by Mr Whale, the dominie of the place, who, as was the common case in those days, although it is fast becoming the exception, showed himself deeply versed in the classics, and gave Scott the benefit of his erudition. Sir Walter pronounced Mr Whale a classical scholar, a humorist, and a worthy man, and he seems also to have been a parochial schoolmaster of the olden stamp, with a certain grandeur of learned lore, as well as a programmatic pompousness and formality, and a keen sensitiveness which showed itself exceptionally "kittle" in the matter of puns upon his name. He taking to Walter, and Walter to him, they mutually served each other, the one in unravelling some of the most intricate mysteries of the Latin idiom, and in pouring out floods of congenial tales, and the other in discharging the functions of that scholastic scarecrow, the monitor.

It was in Kelso, too, that, removed from the scrupulous eye of his father, Walter indulged himself with all the romances he could lay his hands upon. His fastidious parent having appointed novelists to fellowship with Dathan and Abiram in the deepest abyss, his son when at home could only eat of their delicious fruit with stealthy circumspection. But previous to this time he had unearthed some of the gems which gleamed with the keenest sparkle—among others, a copy of Shakspere, which

he found concealed in his mother's bed-room; and for Macbeth and the witches, and all the gorgeous host of Shaksperian characters, as well as Percy's "Reliques of Ancient Poetry," had already developed the strongest passion. The subscription library at Kelso afforded him some means—somewhat limited, it must be confessed of quenching his thirst, but it was not until Dr Blacklock, who, like many others, conceived a liking for the chestnut-haired, blue-eyed boy, had thrown open his collection to him, that he obtained any satisfaction. But this source tapped, he rushed to his fill without restraint of appetite, and mastered Tasso, Spenser, and Ossian in a very short time. For the two former he cherished the admiration of an enthusiast, but "the tawdry repetitions of the Ossianic phraseology disgusted him," and he gave up for ever those spirited scenes, which, if they had been set forth in a less misty garniture, would certainly have kindled his fancy and his admiration. Tradition of any kind was kindred to his mind, and it must have taken a strong repugnance to Macpherson's eccentricities, indeed, to have repelled him from the tempestuous clangour of the battles of Fingal. The character of his mind, however, is shown in nothing so much as in his enthusiasm for the Reliques; he was so lost in the love of this book, that, rather than stop reading it, he often defied the hunger of thirteen years, and lay on the hill-side to which he had retreated the more secludedly to enjoy his favourite. About this time also he became acquainted with Smollett, Fielding, and Ariosto; and it may be mentioned that in the course of his college career, during which he obtained the appropriate name of the "Greek Blockhead,"-for Greek remained Greek to him-he audaciously compared Ariosto with Homer, and pronounced the Greek the inferior poet—a liberty at which

Professor Dalzell was astounded, although the mass of various knowledge which the offender had acquired quite amazed him.

He left the High School a sort of walking miscellany, so far as rare and curious knowledge was concerned; but he had extremely little of the exactness and breadth of the scholar. It must not, however, be supposed that he was utterly devoid of linguistic acumen 'because he himself speaks of his Latin as inexact. His friends, anxious to rescue him from the society of dullards, have declared that he greatly underrated his achievements, giving as a proof of his learning that he was master of Lucian and Claudian. We are inclined to take Scott's own estimate of his attainments, for, independent of the fact that he seldom speaks of himself in the minor key, it must be remembered that he was hampered in the whole course of his life by the ignorance of which his academical career should have divested him. Fondness or partiality for a friend or hero makes us loath to deny him any ornament or attribute. Some of Scott's friends have manifested this leaning, as the friends of other great men have done before, and have not merely credited him with acquirements at which his very secondary education would have revolted. but with attributes of character which he never possessed. The great bent of his mind, as early manifested, was towards archæology and romance. From the initial stages of his study, he was unconsciously educating himself to become an ever-deepening and ever-widening emporium of antiquarianism and a trader in romance; and although, as he grew older, he greatly made up for the irregularity of his culture by acquiring French, Spanish, Italian and German, he was induced to the study of these languages not by any high-souled veneration for the majesty of learning, but, in the first place at all events, by Hoole's

Note in Ariosto, that the Italian language contains a vast fund of romantic lore and knight-errantry, of which young Walter confessed himself as much enamoured as Don Quixote himself. He afterwards declared that his desire to excel in fiction was inspired by the *Novelas* of Cervantes.

After attending three classes at the University, being taught Ethics by Professor Bruce, and Moral Philosophy at the class of Dugald Stewart, his father took him into his own office as an apprentice, thinking that a practical acquaintance with office-work would be useful to him at the bar, for which, after some vacillation, he became destined. With the drudgery of forms and conveyances—except where they threw light on history, or added to the lumber which already loaded his brainhe had the least possible sympathy, but he lightened the dreariness of his clerkly duties with a mass of fiction in English, French, and Italian, concealed among the law papers in his desk. His passion for the purple-coloured extravagances of Eastern romance, for the doughty deeds and absurd amours of chivalry, and for every animated account of the splendours and dangers of conquest and war, struck its roots deeper into his mind-its congenial and propitious soil. The roots tightened, the pores opened to drink in from every fountain that was disclosed to him, the branches shot upwards, and even now the foreshadowing leaves and blossoms began to predict some fruit. He and a comrade, Mr Irving, afterwards a Writer to the Signet, wrote petty romances, which they read for each other's amusement and criticism in the solitudes of Arthur's Seat, whither they retired for peace and seclusion.

In the second year of his apprenticeship the bursting of a blood-vessel confined him to his bed for many weeks, and he utilised the period of convalescence in "illustrating the battles he read of by arranging shells, stones, and pebbles so as to represent encountering armies," and in accumulating more martial knowledge by reading Vertot's "Knights of Malta"—a book which "hovers between history and romance"—and Orme's "History of Indostan," and by watching the soldiers exercising in the Meadows—an arrangement of mirrors being effected in his bed-room for that purpose. The occupations of his leisure were also varied in a not undistinguished way in some of the societies where the youth of Edinburgh aired their politics and speculations; and in one of these societies he met Jeffrey, and other men who rose to eminence and power.

Early evincing the cupidity of the connoisseur, he began collecting curiosities even before his tenth year had expired. In the "den" in which Jeffrey found him when he called after a formal introduction, Scott had formed the nucleus of which Abbotsford, with its endless and aimless armoury and oddity, was the huge increment. A lady of Scott's family described the "den" thus :- "Walter had soon taken to collect out-of-the-way things of all sorts. He had more books than shelves, and a small painted cabinet with Scotch and Roman coins, and so forth. A claymore and Lochaber axe given him by old Invernalyle mounted guard on a little print of Prince Charlie." Mr Irving also testifies to this incipient stage of the mania for curios. Writing to Mr Lockhart he said, "He began early to collect old ballads, and as my mother could repeat a great many, he used to come and learn those she could recite to him. He used to get all the copies of these ballads he could, and select the best." And Scott himself stated he had bound up several volumes of these scraps before he was ten.

After the illness just mentioned his frame, which had never been so fragile as his childhood foreshadowed, acquired fibre, strength, and elasticity. He habituated himself to long walks into the country, and lengthened periods in the saddle—for, like his ancestors, he loved the pleasures of the chase, and, like them too, he loved to mingle in a fight, as many an opponent of his in the "bickers" or town-rows could testify. But his principal object in the excursions he made "was the pleasure of seeing romantic scenery, or what afforded him at least equal pleasure, the places which had been distinguished by remarkable historical events." That love of nature which more or less distinguished his character, though never in a very etherealised form, and ever and again shows itself in his caressing mode of addressing her, while it had its first faint throbs in the bucolic haunts of Sandyknowe, became a really powerful motor and delectable sensation when he wandered by the banks of the Teviot and the Tweed, where he was in the heart of a ballad-beset and ruin-encumbered country. "The romantic feelings," he says, "which I have described as predominating in my mind, naturally rested upon and associated themselves with the grand features of the landscape around me; and the historical incidents or traditional legends connected with many of them, gave to my admiration a sort of intense impression of reverence, which at times made my heart feel too big for its bosom. From this time the love of natural beauty, more especially when combined with ancient ruins, or remains of our fathers' piety or splendour, became with me an insatiable passion, which, if circumstances had permitted, I would willingly have gratified by travelling over half the globe." It is not to be wondered at, then, that thus early he should have set

out on tramps through the Border Counties and the Lothians in quest of his hoary hobbies.

There are still, we are glad to think, many people equally young in whom veneration is as strongly developed, and who in the holiday time investigate with as palpable a thrill the same vestiges of former ages. And it is to be hoped that the appetite for old things, usages, and customs will not easily be extinguished in the breasts of the young; for we know of no more harmless, not to say profitable occupation than that of letting their imaginations cluster about and disport themselves, and consequently expand, among the remains of a cathedral or a castle. But Walter was exceptionally enthusiastic in his rambles, as he was abstracted in his reveries. The length of these rambles alarmed his parents, his father especially, who regarded his roving and novelreading son in the light of a "gangrel gut-scraper;" but if he ever punished or remonstrated with him, the son was "e'en in penance planning sins anew."

In 1790 his apprenticeship expired; and the determination to become an advocate was fixed. From 1789 to 1792, therefore, he devoted himself to the study of the Roman Law—the chair of which was filled by a man in his dotage; and of the Law of Scotland—Mr Hume being Professor,—and donned the wig and gown on 11th July 1792. In the cultivated society of Edinburgh, the Bar—which was even more of a gentlemanly profession then than now—by which we mean that there were more men of recognised birth at it—was always welcome. It had high emoluments, and was the passport to the most lucrative ard influential appointments, and enjoying these advantages had hitherto attracted some of the best blood in the land. The names of Stair, Mackenzie, Hailes, Kames, Jeffrey, Scott, Brougham, and others,

while attesting its high intellectuality in successive generations, amply justify its holding a distinguished place in the esteem of Scotchmen, who, as in the case of Willie Elliot of Millburnholm, look with as much awe upon an advocate as upon a judge. As an advocate, therefore, Scott was entitled to regard his entrance into society as secure, provided he never flagrantly outraged, by an openly dissolute or dishonest life, the traditions of a gentlemanly profession.

Having already adverted to the not unwholesome influence of Presbyterianism on his character, we may here be permitted to remark on the incentives he derived from an advantageous citizenship, as well as the fortitude and manliness with which his character was imbued, first through association with a pure, refined, and educated circle, and secondly, through exposure to the coarseness

and dissipation of coteries traditionally rude.

Like other natives of Edinburgh, he was proud of the city of his birth, and in after-years caressed it with constant endearments. It is not presumption to say that no British city, except London, is so beset with the associations of history, or so touched with the rose-tints of romance; and in the elegance and pride of its populace, and the picturesqueness of its situation, it probably excels most of the cities of Europe. But when Scott, Jeffrey, and Brougham were young men, the provincial town did not appear in it so much as the forsaken capital. Revelling in royal memories, it was not slow to mimic the ceremony of its halcyon days, when there was a king in the castle and a queen in Holyrood. Every close and wynd had its cherished fame and haunting fable; every lintel its escutcheon; every mansion its romance. Quaint society in a quaint town! It was in its great transition period; and with the relics and manners of an extinct

regalism, it but awaited the advent of an historian. The nobles and gentles of the dying century were vanishing. London had greater charms for them, and in their social and public places, the professional and professorial classes were rising into affluence and power. Among these some remnants of the old nobility lingered; but in the main fashion and society were composed of lawyers, doctors, and ministers, with a sprinkling of the army—the place of king and queen as leaders being occupied by a few baronets and judges. Nevertheless the education so liberally diffused through the professional classes not only then, but to this day, preserved a refinement and culture equalled by few provincial towns.

A mind like Scott's, deeply susceptible of the impressions which such surroundings were calculated to make, could not but feel their power. If the peculiar character of his early experience had not already done it, the reminiscences he listened to, the scenes he haunted, all redolent of numberless intermingled memories — the crowded closes and the labyrinthine abodes of the High Streetwhere sculptured shields and legends, oak floors and carved roofs, secret stairs and whimsical turrets, had in their deserted and monumental glory become decayed anomalies even as the emblems of departed grandeurmust have given his mind its final bend towards an intensely æsthetic antiquarianism. For it must always be borne in mind that whatever the musty relic was that Scott gathered about him-whatever the moss-grown wall or ivy-clad tower that his enamoured fancy fondled—his admiration was not the fruit of anything so paltry as the mere mania for curios by itself. We believe he had hardly a scabbard or a snuff-box, a cabinet or a piece of armour, which his imagination did not at once invest with all the circumstance which unfettered reverie suggested. All which strongly indicated a youth of warm emotions and universal veneration, the efflux of whose genius would probably go backward to a legendary past.

Apart from such congenial associations, which have made it to a great degree the reliquary of Scotland, the city of his birth was in other respects peculiarly fitted to expand his imagination, and make the poetic faculty thrive. A much smaller and dirtier city than the Edinburgh of to-day, it was beyond the power of its inhabitants, even if they had been a boorish and insensible race, to have destroyed by any municipal whim, its unique and well-known beauty. From Holyrood to the castle was a vast ridge, on which the dwellings of its traders clustered in one serrated range, and about which the traditions of ages—from the fabulous times of the white doe which rescued King David, to the triumphs and gallantries of Prince Charlie—hung like one of its own great grey mists, but tinged with the amber-light of the sun retreating behind the Grampians. True, there were not so many towers and turrets, pinnacles and spires, piercing the air with that airy seductiveness of outline which we behold, nor so many palaces and monuments serving to obscure interspersing blotches in the glory of the general proportion; but then the magnificence of the Stuarts' court, with the wars and contentions of nobles, and the savage quarrels of kilted clans, was not so remote; and therefore, perhaps, in its earlier and quieter and less artificial loveliness, with the North Loch at the foot of the Castle, and the rich undulations of a champaign country around—as yet uncorrupted by the creed of the modern mason, that every spot under Heaven is only good for a building speculation !—and its streets undisturbed by the rough usages of this busier time, we are not sure but his Edinburgh was more fitted

than ours to send poets into fine frenzies, and involve the world in their sublime fancies. There was the New Town, for instance, a much more eligible locality, we should imagine, in respect of residential amenities than the present, which even with its liberal sprinkling of cassocks and wigs, and quills and laboratories, must have been specially suited for the exercise of the love of beauty. It rose, as it rises now, in tiers and steps and toilsome gradients to the castled climax; but then it was not in the least infested by those endless lines of shops and business places, which, while they impart life and variety to the town, could never be expected to send poetasters adrift by the craziness of verse. Long rows of habitations, proud and monotonously regular, fringing, as they still fringe, umbrageous gardens: that was the character of the new town which had then begun to spring up between the North Loch and the Water of Leith.

And we cannot help here observing that these proud and grand edifices, with their Greek columns, pilasters, and entablatures, permeated as they were by a thick atmosphere of culture and hauteur, were remarkably appropriate to the kind of society that had sprung up: a learned society, who trod the streets with the mien of philosophers, and retired within the severe portals of the uniform thoroughfares with solemn satisfaction. It has been said that the New Town of Edinburgh is an admirable type of the Presbyterian tone. Perhaps it is, and perhaps it symbolised much more truthfully than the general picturesqueness of the city the culture and refinement of a large mass of its inhabitants. A people who had not yet discovered the splendours of their country, would, we imagine, have much rather preferred characterisation by the grand simplicity and severity of their dwellings, than any ostentatious adornment or æsthetic capability

of their town. But in all such matters Scott united to the correct taste of the cultivated man the enthusiasm of the poet; and though, so far as the development of its inherent charms was concerned, his town was but in its infancy, he perceived in the vast irregularities of the situation, the very quarries out of which unrivalled perfection might be hewn. He was keenly alive to the functions and possibilities of its society in influencing his own and other people's character; he paid deference to its leaders, and complied with its legitimate usages; but the deference was reluctant and the compliance perfunctory compared with that fond alacrity with which he pursued the instruction and companionship of nature and the associations of history.

But how was its then society composed? We have just indicated the tone at least of the higher grades, and it would involve a much longer description than we can devote to it here to explain the peculiarities of so diversely constituted an entity. Let it only be said that there were two main divisions which contemporary authorities often refer to, and which few of their successors can possibly mistake. The first was composed of those who clung closely to the older customs, including heavy drinking—the club-loving, dinner-eating, convivial set, for the most part inhabiting the better houses of the old town, and best described in the words of Robert Ferguson—

"Now night, that's cunzied * chief for fun Is with her usual rites begun.

Some to porter, some to punch Retire; while noisy ten hours' drum

^{*} Wealthy.

Gars * a' the trades gang danderin' hame. Now mony a club jocosed full Gie a' to merriment and glee; Wi' sang and glass they fley + the power O' care that wad harass the hour."

Or perhaps better still in the words of Sir Alexander Boswell—

"O'er draughts of wine the beau would moan his love, O'er draughts of wine the cit his bargain drove, O'er draughts of wine the writer penned the will, And legal wisdom counselled o'er a gill."

The records of old Edinburgh are crowded with the reminiscences of these bibulous parties. They are ignorant of its jocose history indeed who cannot readily recall in this connection the numerous clubs which professed drinking as an accomplishment, and the taverns and oyster-cellars where, not long before Scott was born, men and women resorted without the least shame to enjoy a wild carouse. There were the Hell-fire Club, the Spendthrift Club, the Sweating Club, the Horn Order, the Dirty Club, the Bonnet Lairds and Black Wigs, and many more whose first object was the entertainment of their members by evenings of savage indulgence and unrestrained mirth. We have said a few pages back that the traditions of Scott's profession were gentlemanly; but it must not be assumed that at that time deep potations and occasionally a reeling gait were deemed inconsistent with a gentlemanly profession or an influential position. The most noted topers of the time were more often the judges and counsel who expiscated truth from the confused jumble of pleas and proofs in the Parliament House than the honest traders who sold pennyworths of

^{*} Makes.

smallwares in their booths in the High Street. And Mr Chambers in his "Traditions" says that a M. Simond, who published a tour in Scotland in 1811, expressed his surprise on stepping one morning into the Outer House of the Session and finding in a grave and dignified judge the gentleman (Lord Newton) who had been engaged most of the preceding night in a fierce debauch. These bacchanals had not disappeared in Scott's youth, though a greater degree of decency was beginning to be observed. It is gratifying to find, however, that though the temptation to a young man in his respectable position must have been pretty strong, he resisted all immoderate and impure impulses. Those "boosing" coteries he avoided even in his most thoughtless and frolicsome days. "He had an instinctive delicacy about him which made him recoil with utter disgust from low and vulgar debaucheries," and it was only in his subsequent expeditions across the hills that his natural joyousness betrayed him into undue conviviality, which, although harmless, his serener judgment condemned. On such occasions he is described by Mr Shortreed, his companion, thus:-"Eh me! sic an endless fund of humour and drollery as he had then wi' him. Never ten yards but we were either laughing or roaring and singing. Wherever we stopped how brawlie he suited himsel' to everybody! He ave did as the lave did; never made himsel' the great man or took ony airs in the company. I've seen him in a' moods in these jaunts, grave and gay, daft and serious, sober and drunk (this, however, even in our wildest rambles was but rare), but drunk or sober he was aye the gentleman. He looked excessively heavy and stupid when he was fou, but he was never out o' gude humour." An early indication surely of the temper that in after-years could withstand the shock of a hundred

quizzing visitors a-day, who, some of them, were almost incited to contumely by the man's coolness in not asking them to dinner!

Perhaps innocent readers in these virtuous days will find no merit in Scott eschewing the snares which entrapped and destroyed a greater genius in Robert Burns. Certainly, if his nature were not tainted by any passion for indulgence, there was no credit in refraining from that in which there was no rebellious inclination. Scott's nature was not a very impassioned one at the best—and it is always the impassioned soul that makes the grossest debauchee. Yet, in his immunity from intemperance, there was a virtue which shone the brighter because of his reputed sociality and kindliness. Few young men of his time could boast the same distinction—particularly among those legal gentlemen who had to sweep the oaken floor of the Parliament House for years without earning a fifty-pound note; for though their education and calling taught them to abjure the bibulous proneness of their predecessors and neighbours, yet they occasionally did indulge in a liberal manner, albeit in a much more skilful and hidden way, and without any of the orgic riot of the old clubs.

While, with other young people, he was thus exposed to convivial influences, and bore the brunt of them with imperturbable composure, there was operating upon him a much more congenial power, in the shape of those professional celebrities which at that time lent lustre to the society of the learned in the Modern Athens. For the reasons we have indicated, Scott's profession, independent of his friends, would have passed him to the best society; but for intellectual surroundings he was not entirely dependent upon his profession, for in the houses of Dr Rutherfurd, his grandfather, of John Home, the author

of "Douglas," and of Dr Adam Ferguson, the moralist and historian, with whose son he was intimate in his college days, he was permitted to mix with the class of mind most fitted to draw out his accomplishments and excite his ambition.

His principal companions were William Erskine, the son of an Episcopal clergyman in Perthshire, afterwards raised to the bench as Lord Kinedder, who seems to have "promoted" Scott to prelacy—an exceptionally good man, who, as Scott says, "died the victim of a hellishly false story;" and William Clerk, the son of John Clerk of Eldin, the author of "Naval Tactics," who had an "itch for disputation," though the slave of incurable indolence. He appears to have been the only one who had a prophetic sense of Scott's future greatness; and it was he who, besides teaching him the arts of the beau, besought him to preserve a more reserved demeanour towards his father's apprentices, with whom he thought he was on terms of undignified intimacy.

This advice was not altogether necessary. Scott was naturally proud, but throughout his career he had a knack of gathering about him those who could serve him—from the boys, whose mothers supplied fresh ballads, to the Ballantynes and Constables of his later years. We fancy he recoiled from inferiority, especially if he thought no intellectual or worldly advantage would accrue. He fraternised with *one* of his father's apprentices, partly from the generous impulses of boyhood, which, except in the juvenescent snob, tardily yields to the demands, and recognises the distinctions of society; and partly because the youth had literary tastes, and gave Walter the benefit of his conceptions and composition.

Be that as it may, the fact that Scott was a gentleman,

his familiarity with the most intellectual of the youth of Edinburgh—through his having been librarian and secretary of the Speculative Debating Society—his connection with the Rutherfurds, and, above all, his proficiency in story-telling, added to his being a member of the leading profession, procured him all that was most enviable to a young man who cared more for the culture of his mind than the comfort of his body. David Boyle, who rose to the dignity of Lord President of the Supreme Court, Thomas Douglas, afterwards Earl of Selkirk, Adam Fergusson, the son of the Professor, and William Clerk, who was a kinsman of the baronets of Penicuik, sufficiently denote the rank and worth of his companions. Frequently at dinner at Professor Fergusson's, he met the brightest of those lights which adorned the waning century. Among these was Robert Burns, who rewarded him with a look of approbation, because he alone among a dinnerparty knew the authorship of the lines—

"Cold on Canadian hills, or Minden's plain,
Perhaps the parent wept her soldier slain;
Bent o'er her babe, her eye dissolved in dew;
The big drops mingling with the milk he drew,"—

which he saw upon a print, the subject of which readily drew the poet's easy tear.

It is clear that in such society, which was tolerably free of indulgence and indolence, Scott's mind must have acquired that firm intellectual tone which was necessary before he could embark—suppose he had such intentions—on any literary venture. Metaphysics and philosophy had attained the summit of popularity in his circle, and while he would much rather have listened to traditions of Border keeps than to polished converse on the subtleties of Aristotle and Bacon, the mere force of

this seasonable discipline must have taught him to apply those rules of classical adjustment he had learned, and without which we fear an intolerable diffuseness might have encumbered the spontaneity of his style. There were, too, among men of a purely literary turn—(the philosophers did not care to be lighted in their reveries by the "fire-flies" or story-tellers of literature)—indications of a desire to prosecute the study of philology, and as a branch of that study the whole body of Saxon literature, which to almost all British people was as yet an unexplored tract of letters. This was much more to Scott's purpose than any contentions about Whately or Berkeley he might have to sit out; and it was with keen and restless avidity that he heard all that the polite had to say about the tales and legends which the tale-wrights of that not wellknown fatherland were sending across the North Sea, to the other offshoots of the Saxon stock.

We shall have more to say about this by and by. Meanwhile, let us observe that of Scott's inner life in those earlier years, when faith, scepticism, or laxity begins. we have few indications. He was a good-humoured and good-hearted moral being, of a somewhat insensate type of spirituality. His books being devoid of personal dogma or doctrine from beginning to end, are not of the class that throw much light on the inner nature of the writer. Whether he was in what the French call a state of nature, or what his father called a state of grace, he never condescends to say. His faith, whatever it was, had no very distinct manifestations, except that he afterwards read the Episcopal service in his home. If he had conflicts or stifled temptations, or the struggles of which Pascal died, he was sensible enough to confess them to his Maker, instead of giving them utterance in his books. and making the events of a young lady's romance hinge

upon them. Even his closest intimates were excluded from the sanctuary of his innermost thoughts and feelings.

His friends, it is said, often blindly rallied him upon his coldness. But at an early age, as became a poetic and generous mind, he was capable of manly and enduring passion—and a passion evincing much more than the evanescent susceptivity of romance. Mr Lockhart says it was about 1790, when nineteen years of age, that he was observed to lay aside that carelessness in dress, about which his friends had joked him. In short, he became fastidious in his attire, and, as indolent Clerk observed, "set up for a squire of dames."

The old Assembly Room at the Bow was the resort of the fashionable squires and dames of those formal days, and it was there that Goldsmith saw the beauty of Edinburgh assembled, and gave the following facetious account of the proceedings:—"When a stranger enters the dancing hall, he sees one end of the room taken up with the ladies, who sit dismally in a corner by themselves; at the other end stand their pensive partners that are to be; but there is no more intercourse between the sexes than between two countries at war. The ladies, indeed, may ogle and the gentlemen sigh, but an embargo is laid upon any closer commerce. At length, to interrupt hostilities, the lady directress, intendant, or what you will, pitches on a lady and a gentleman to walk a minuet. After five or six couples have thus walked the gauntlet, all stand up to country dances, each gentleman furnished with a partner through the aforesaid lady directress. So they dance much and say nothing, and thus concludes our assembly."

The late Duchess of Sutherland said she well remembered Scott in these old rooms about 1790. But, on account of their inconvenience, they had been exchanged for the new rooms in George Street in 1784; so that, we

fancy, there must be some mistake about that date. Her Grace said, "Young Walter was a comely creature." And with his marvellous fund of miscellaneous knowledge, with his sprightliness and stature, with his clear blue eye, his nut-brown hair, his fresh and open face, and dignified brow, and with his warm and gentle smile, he must have succeeded fairly well in his gallantry. But a flirt like Goethe he never was. Endowing every woman with romantic perfection, as all his works testify, he was much too gallant to perceive the defects of her sex, or at least to dwell upon them; and it will be remembered that he refused to write a life of Queen Mary, because "his opinion was contrary to his feelings."

"It was a proud night," he said to Mr Lockhart, "when I first found that a pretty young woman could think it worth her while to sit and talk with me in a corner of the ballroom, while all the world were capering in our view." The young man had already set his heart upon a lady whose hand he never won, and his deep devotion, his constancy, purity, and manly tenderness, were the more admirable that they were spontaneities of a not immaculate age. The lady was Margaret, daughter of Sir John Belches of Invermay, with whom he had opened a sweetly sad acquaintance in Greyfriars' churchyard, under an umbrella which he offered at the close of the service. She resided opposite his father's house; and his mother and the lady's mother having been intimate in youth, an intercourse sprung up between the families—except in the case of Sir John and the lawyer, who hardly exchanged words, save when Mr Scott warned Sir John that Walter had ambitious designs on the hand of his daughter—a warning the recipient treated courteously but lightly.

That Walter's passion was deep and true, that he believed he had inspired an attachment in the lady, that they continued on intimate terms for several years, and that in the end she married Sir William Forbes of Pitsligo, at that time a flourishing banker, are well-known facts which do not need to be laboured here. In his suit Scott had enlisted the aid as well as the sympathy of his friends—his chief confidant being Miss Jane Cranstoun, an enthusiastic soul, born in 1760, whose sister was married to Dugald Stewart, whose brother became Lord Corehouse, and who herself, in 1797, became the Countess Purgstall, and went to Schloss Hainfeld in Styria, where she spent a somewhat chequered and unhappy life — becoming in her old age a grief-worn, feeble, and faded wreck—

"Yet in her ashen cold was fire yreken."

In his work published in 1836, Captain Basil Hall describes how, in passing a winter in Lower Styria, he stumbled upon an invitation from this aged countrywoman—an invitation which resulted in his being domesticated in her schloss. Here—although it is scarcely in order-is the Captain's account of how Miss Cranstoun first introduced Sir Walter Scott to the British public, and, at the same time, helped him in his love affairs:-"About the year 1793, Burger's extraordinary poem of 'Leonora' found its way to Scotland, and it happened that a translation of it was read at Dugald Stewart's, I think by Mrs Barbauld. Miss Cranstoun described this strange work to her friend, the young poet, whose imagination was set on fire by the strange crowd of images and novel situations. He never rested till, by the help of a grammar and dictionary, he contrived to study it in the original, and she, as usual, encouraged him to persevere, and, at the end of a few weeks' application to the German, he had made out the sense, and had himself written a poetical translation of the poem.

"One morning at half-past six, Miss Cranstoun was roused by her maid, who said Mr Scott was in the diningroom, and wished to speak with her immediately. She dressed in a great hurry, and hastened downstairs wondering what he could have to say to her at that early hour. He met her at the door, and holding up his manuscript, eagerly begged her to listen to his poem. Of course she gave it all attention, and having duly praised it, sent him away quite happy, after begging permission to retain the poem for a day or two, in order to look over it more carefully. He said she might keep it till he returned from the country, where he was about to proceed on a visit to the house where the lady to whom he was attached was residing.

"His friendly critic was already aware of this intended visit, and an idea having suggested itself to her during his animated perusal of the poem, she lost no time in putting it into execution. As soon as he was gone, she sent for their common friend, Mr William Erskine, afterwards Lord Kinedder, and confided her scheme to him, of which he fully approved. They soon arranged to print a few copies of the new translation of *Lenore*, one of which was to be thrown off on the finest paper, and bound in the most elegant style. In a few days the book was ready, and care being taken to dispatch it, addressed to Mr Scott, so that it should arrive at what was deemed the most propitious moment, it was placed in the poet's hands just as the company were assembled round the tea-table after dinner.

"Much curiosity was expressed by the party, the fair lady inclusive, as the splendid little volume gradually escaped from its folds, and displayed itself to the astonished eyes of the author, who for the first time saw himself in print, and who, all unconscious of the glories which awaited him, had not even dreamt of appearing in such a dress. Concealment was out of the question, and he was called upon by the unanimous acclamation of the party to read the poem, of which, as it happened, none of them had ever heard even the name."

The device was unsuccessful. Why the lady was given to an affluent banker, instead of a professional clansman of Buccleuch, who had no reason to anticipate ill luck in life, has never been revealed. Mr Hutton, in his recent work,* says:-"The maid, perhaps, regarded banking as safer, if less brilliant work than the most effective description of skeleton riders." So far as we have been able to discover, there is no foundation for any such insinuation. But the disappointment, however caused, was sharp and bitter, and stung his pride—for the egotism, never inflated, with which he speaks of himself, shows a sensitive and highly-strung soul in the matter of preferences. His frustrated hopes tinged his life with a sombre hue; and the features which charmed him in youth shine in the "Lay of the Last Minstrel," "Rokeby," and "Redgauntlet," and inspired these beautiful lines, which suggest rather than discover "the rocks which lurked beneath the deep:"

"The violet in her greenwood bower
Where birchen boughs with hazels mingle,
May boast itself the fairest flower
In glen, or copse, or forest dingle.

"Though fair her gems of azure hue
Beneath the dewdrop's weight reclining,
I've seen an eye of lovelier blue,
More sweet through watery lustre shining.

"The summer sun that dew shall dry
Ere yet the day be past its morrow,
Nor longer in my false love's eye
Remained the tear and parting sorrow."

^{* &}quot;English Men of Letters"—Sir W. Scott, p. 36.

What blunted this blow more than anything else, perhaps, was the magnanimous and considerate conduct of the rival who "grasped the hand for which he pined." In the prosperity and adversity which alternated in the course of his life, Mr Forbes was a warm friend, and delicate-minded helper. Though the sorrow of the romance was never quite crushed out of Scott, its traces became fainter as the years went by; and at Gillsland in 1797 he met Miss Charpentier, daughter of a royalist of Lyons, who had been driven to this country by the troubles of the Revolution. This lady, about whom for a time he was "sair beside himsel'," he married on the 24th December of the same year, and soon afterwards set up house in South Castle Street, Edinburgh. Mrs Scott, who naturally possessed a good deal of the airiness of the French character, and with whom, on the whole, he had a fair share of domestic happiness, brought him £,200 a-year, and by-and-by two sons and two daughters.

Since his admission to the bar in 1792, Scott had made little progress in public favour; but failure was due to his own pride rather than the stupidity of solicitors. These gentlemen, to whom the more important courtwork of Scotland is entrusted, have hitherto, as a rule, been a discriminating class of men. As their business requires, they are much more of a legal than of a literary or scholarly bent, and naturally prefer to bestow their patronage on the forensic fledglings whose minds can condescend to the minutiæ of the Law. Scott inwardly rebelled against the circumstances in which he found himself. In the fact that patronage was in the hands of men of inferior birth and attainment, he felt an irritating incongruity, and took it ill that he should have to wait for their favour. This, of course, was high play to start with, and the game could not but be a

losing one, especially with a young advocate who professed decided literary leanings. Solicitors have the penetration to know that the true man of letters, with his perfervid fancies and cosmic speculations, cannot well be narrowed into a legal rut. Therefore, for giving the cold shoulder to genius in the person of Walter Scott, they can hardly be reproached. With his aristocratic bias, it was he who was the aggressor. Had he been a devotee of Law, and shewn diligence in his calling, and courted favour either by a specially suave demeanour or by supercilious and dignified airs, he would probably have been floated over the rocks of his literary proclivities as successfully as Jeffrey, a contemporary man of letters as well as of law. But Scott swept the Parliament House for ten years, and in that period his professional income ranged from only f_{123} to something short of f_{1250} . He once pleaded a drunken minister's case before the General Assembly of the Kirk, and was rebuked by a high-souled moderator for his freedom in quoting the profane language which the bibulous parson had used. Then with reference to his practice before the Circuit Court at Iedburgh, he used to say:-

> "Yelping terrier, rusty key, Was Walter Scott's best Jeddart fee."

This was with reference to a burglar who, instead of a fee, gave him the advice that the best way to keep out housebreakers was to set a barking cur on the watch, and put a creaking lock on the door. In 1799 his appointment, through the influence of Buccleuch, to the Sheriffship of Selkirk secured him £300 a-year. The duties of that office he discharged with dignity and satisfaction for thirty-one years. In 1816 he was made a clerk of Session, with emoluments amounting to £1000 a-year.

This income, however, he did not enjoy for five years, as he undertook to do the work during his predecessor's life-time in return for the certainty of the office.

It was his experience during the first ten years of the toga which partly led to his adoption of a literary life. He himself declared—"It is prudent, if not absolutely necessary, in a young barrister to appear completely engrossed by his profession; however destitute of employment he may be, he ought to preserve, if possible, the appearance of full occupation. He should at least seem perpetually engaged among his law papers, dusting them as it were, and as Ovid advises the fair, Si nullus erit pulvis, tamen execute nullum." But this he could not do; and instead, he told stories, for which his repute was unapproachable, studied German, and scoured the country for metrical antiquities—expeditions to which he imparted a piquant relish by unceasing exercise, for he was an indefatigable pedestrian, and a daring horseman. A patriot too, at the time of the threatened invasion, he rode a charger in the Edinburgh Light-Horse, of which he was paymaster and secretary. Indeed, he wrote part of "Marmion"—three cantos—when encamped at Musselburgh. Who does not hear the snort of the war-horse and the thunder and rattle of contending hosts in all his martial strains? Then, when some Irish medical students attempted to stifle the National Anthem in the theatre, he cracked three Hibernian skulls with his cudgel, for which justifiable act he was bound over to keep the peace. With Emerson, and all wise men, he considered health the first thing to attend to; and there can be no doubt that the courage and spirit with which he flung himself into sport fortified the life which in childhood had flickered, but which now burned in a strong and steady flame.

Long ago, on account of his excursions into the Borders, his father feared he would be good for nothing but a "gangrel gut-scraper," or strolling fiddler. In spite of these strictures his expeditions increased in number and importance as manhood matured. Every vacation was now devoted to shooting hares and bagging ballads. In this hunt after old lore, which was his only passion at that time, he was carried successively to Hexham Abbey—the old Saxon Cathedral, around which a quaint market town clusters like a brood around the parent fowl; to Liddesdale, where he made seven raids in as many years, and unearthed the bones of a hundred romances. He also visited Tullibody, the quaint but now somewhat dismantled seat of the Abercrombies, at the foot of Dunmyat; Rob Roy's country; Craighall, the Tully-Veolan of "Waverley;" Meigle, where he met Patrick Murray, the military antiquary; Dunnottar, the rock on which the Keiths were cradled to the lullaby of a tempestuous sea, lashing an iron-bound coast; Dunnottar churchyard, where he met Old Mortality for the first and last time; Mertoun house, the seat of the chief of his sept, Watt of Harden, whose wife, a daughter of Count Brühl, was, he says, the first woman of real fashion who took him up. He was also entertained at Bothwell Castle in 1799, the wife of whose noble owner—a daughter of Buccleuch—was one of his truest friends through life; at Craignethan Castle, the original of Tillytudlem; and at Hamilton Palace, in 1801, the noble occupants of which greatly admired "Glenfinlas" and the "Eve of St John," then his only published pieces of any moment. These raids, as he called them, were excellent training. His prodigious memory became a vast storehouse, in which every legend of any historical, domestic, or antiquarian interest, was garnered. He devoured everything he came across, and a splendidly equipped assimilative faculty enabled him to exhaust all that he devoured. He was sowing the seeds which afterwards yielded such wondrous exuberance, endowing the husbandman with wealth, and crowning him with fame. The lavish diffuseness of the fruit, and the train of honour he enjoyed are entirely traceable to the traditions of other ages, on which he constantly fed. His longings were purely for collecting; production was an afterthought. He was always aware that if he discovered a literary bent, his chance of success at the bar was as good as damned; but from the causes we have already pointed out he defied that certainty later on, and in the abundant leisure which his practice allowed, made several attempts at translation, and also at tale-writing, which latter was to result in something very tangible.

In the hospitalities thus held out to him, he experienced a new set of felicities, which, while innocuous to a philosophic mind, in him awoke agonies of yearning and anticipation, which even the enormous successes he attained were powerless to stifle. What was most likely to strike him in the gilded halls of his country's chiefs? was it the vanity which such high companionship excited? or the flattery which a rhyming trickster might expect from patronising dames, the barren tedium of whose bower-spent hours he could pleasantly beguile? We rather suspect it was a cutting sense of his penury and meanness which severed him from what, according to the obliquity or narrowness of his philosophy, he believed to be real greatness—a title and possessions. Here was the first homage he paid to what Carlyle, quoting Jean Paul, calls the "golden calf of self-love." The vast libraries of those ducal palaces—where the kinship or friendship of their owners welcomed him-with their ceilings of oak elaborately carved, their stained glass, and suits of shining armour, and spears and bows, and abundant relics of the times which his fancy haunted—these kindled his enthusiasm for the quaintness, the fierceness, and also the frolic of those historic periods, which the increasing distance and the inswathing glamour of romance were rendering more and more indistinct and illusive, and to him, therefore, the more alluring. But they also awoke perversions, and discontents and longings, and gave his wheel the first turn round himself as its axle.

This, however, is more matter of inference from subsequent externisations than immediate manifestations. As yet he was a young advocate of overflowing life, with a wonderful adaptability of character, which could captivate smugglers and shepherds, and fascinate the titled dwellers in ancestral halls. He could follow the hounds with the best of them, and risk his life in spearing a salmon. Or, better than that, he could wander up the lonely hillside in the luxuriant summer, or the prodigal autumn. What more joyful to him, in those early years of crowded fancies, than to court the furze of his honest grey hills, and lie in the arms of the expiring day, watching the fire-god pouring his showers of saffron and purple on the blue heath, and the dappled woods, and the little lost snow-clouds with their fleecy fringes? There was the murky ridge at the occident behind which the god was going, trailing his luminous majesty behind him! What more seductive to a poetic soul than to watch those variegated messages of light—shafts of glory from the quiver away in the deep purest, loveliest, reddest shafts, with the points dipped in a dreamy purply-vermillion — ambitious shafts cleaving dim patches of amber, and piercing even to the birthplace of another day, and shy shafts that blushed to find themselves on the bosom of a reluctant night? Well might he exclaim in those solemn moments by the Tweed:

"Oh! warm fire-god! what beneficence it is in thee to bid us, the dull children of the day, so beautiful goodnight. But thou art not yet gone! There is thy languishing liquescence stretched over the deep, deep blue—thy amber glances thrown athwart the quiet nooks where the Tweed rolls, or the streams purl, or the dank mountain-tarns speak superstitious stillnesses; and giving parting kisses to moorland and valley, and rugged hill-top. Good-night! good-night! thou lamp of our life! thou light of our toil!"

This is, perhaps, the language of exaggeration, as applied to Scott, in his later years; but, in his early and undimmed days, his emotions at the sight of nature were deep enough even for a transcendental apostrophe. He loved nature's loveliest scenes with that generous enthusiasm which every young man of a poetic temperament can hardly help indulging, and the enthusiasm was all the more wild if the landscape were but the setting of some peel or abbey walls. As a rule, however, his love of the beautiful was of a robust type—admirably suited, and, in some respects, wedded to, the athleticism of his country life. This explains why many of his expeditions were marked by fits of joviality, which, to say the least, attest a high state of bodily health. He was a brisk young man, full of effervescing frolic, infecting even the most vapid with a right healthy flow of genuine spirit. The anecdote we quote in this connection is not given here for the first time, but it is so comical and characteristic, that we do not scruple to repeat it, although Carlyle remarks that such doings "are questionable, and not exemplary, whisky clearly mounting beyond its level:"-" On reaching, one evening, some Charlieshope or other (I forget the name) among those wildernesses, they found a kindly

reception, as usual; but, to their agreeable surprise after some days of hard living, a measured and orderly hospitality as respected liquor. Soon after supper, at which a bottle of elderberry-wine alone had been produced, a young student of divinity, who happened to be in the house, was called upon to take the 'big ha' Bible,' in the good old fashion of 'Burns's Saturday Night;' and some progress had been already made in the service, when the good man of the farm, whose 'tendency,' as Mr Mitchell says, 'was soporific,' scandalised his wife and the dominie by starting suddenly from his knees, and, rubbing his eyes, with a stentorian exclamation of 'By —, here's the keg at last!' and in tumbled, as he spoke the word, a couple of sturdy herdsmen, whom, on hearing a day before of the advocate's approaching visit, he had despatched to a certain smuggler's haunt, at some considerable distance, in quest of a supply of run brandy from the Solway Frith. The pious 'exercise' of the household was hopelessly interrupted. With a thousand apologies for his hitherto shabby entertainment, this jolly Elliot, or Armstrong, had the welcome keg mounted on the table without a moment's delay; and gentle and simple, not forgetting the dominie, continued carousing about it until daylight streamed in upon the party. Sir Walter Scott seldom failed, when I saw him in company with his Liddesdale companion, to mimic with infinite humour the sudden outburst of his old host on hearing the clatter of horses' feet, which he knew to indicate the arrival of the kegthe consternation of the dame—and the rueful despair with which the young clergyman closed the book.'*

We have already seen what Mr Shortreed said on the

^{* &}quot;Lockhart's Life," vol. i. pp. 195-199.

subject of Scott's conviviality, and we daresay no one will accuse him of very gross or frequent tipsiness. He was too busy, we suspect, in those excursions to waste much time in fruitless dissipation; and what Mr Lockhart says on the subject may be taken as the most reliable indication of his peripatetic occupations:-"During seven successive years Scott made a raid, as he called it, into Liddesdale with Mr Shortreed, Sheriffsubstitute of Roxburgh, for his guide; exploring every rivulet to its source, and every ruined peel from foundation to battlement. At this time no wheeled carriage had ever been seen in the district;—the first, indeed, was a gig, driven by Scott himself for a part of his way, when on the last of these seven excursions. There was no inn nor public-house of any kind in the whole valley; the travellers passed from the shepherd's hut to the minister's manse, and again from the cheerful hospitality of the manse to the rough and jolly welcome of the homestead; gathering, wherever they went, songs and tunes, and occasionally more tangible relics of antiquity, even such a 'rowth of auld knicknackets' as Burns ascribes to Captain Grose."

These favourite expeditions to the country are useful only as illustrating the habits of a great man and the growth of a great mind; and their most immediate consequence was clearly the accumulation of materials, not only for the "Minstrelsy of the Border," but the vast inheritance of tradition which he has bequeathed to us.

According to his biographer, it was in the summer of 1798 when he had hired a cottage at Lasswade, on the Esk, that he seems first to have felt something of his real strength. His life at that retired village, in the bosom of his family, is described as being peculiarly

happy. Sir John Stoddart depicts, in his "Scottish Tour" published in 1801, the simple elegance of the cottage and the domestic picture which he there contemplated: "a man of native kindness and cultivated talent passing the intervals of a learned profession amidst scenes highly favourable to his poetic inclinations,-not in churlish and rustic solitude, but in the daily exercise of the most precious sympathies as a husband, a father, and a friend." The duties of his sheriffship often called him into Ettrick Forest, the very heart of the ballad country, where, in addition to his already numerous cronies, he formed the acquaintance of James Hogg, the famous shepherd, and William Laidlaw, who became his faithful friend and steward until death, and who framed one of the most plaintive ditties in the Scottish, or any tongue, in which he makes a love-stricken maiden sing:-

"Oh, what is't that pits my puir hert in a flutter?

An' what gars the tears come sae fast tae my e'e?

If I wasna' ettled to be ony better,

Then what gars me wish ony better to be?

I'm just like a lammie that loses it's mither,

Nae mither or frien' the puir lammie can see;

I fear I ha'e tint my puir hert a' thegither,

Nae wonder the tears fa' sae fast frae my e'e."

It was, we say, in the midst of these gentle and retired scenes, so propitious to the play of his muse, that Scott developed the design he had conceived some time before of issuing the "Border Minstrelsy."

But before speaking further of this project—the most daring he had yet thought of—the reader must recall what the young author had already published. "Lenore," being a mere love stratagem, needs no mention, beyond the fact

that it was his maiden effort. But it was followed in 1799, three years later, by a more pretentious translation, which received some little notice at the time,—"Götz von Berlichingen,"—and which Scott himself heard favourably spoken of in London; then revisited for the first time since childhood. The original of that same poem had taken the world by surprise when it appeared, and the old remark that it spoke exactly what the world was waiting impatiently to hear-has been made about it scores of times since then. Of course the world longed, as it has longed since the Reformation, to hear any voice with the ring of genius or sincerity or sentimentality about it; and that remark is therefore now inappropriate as well as flat. But there was something remarkable about the poem, independent of its purely literary merit—which was great—in the evidence it bore, that in Germany and in Britain there were two minds drawing inspiration almost simultaneously from the same source, namely, historical association and supernatural episode. The influence of "Götz," the work of Goethe when a young man, is thus accurately described in an early number of the London and Westminster Review:

"The works just mentioned, 'Götz' and 'Werter,' though noble specimens of youthful talent, are still not so much distinguished by their intrinsic merits as by their splendid fortune. It would be difficult to name two books which have exercised a deeper influence on the subsequent literature of Europe than these two performances of a young author: his first-fruits, the produce of his twenty-fourth year. 'Werter' appeared to seize the hearts of men in all quarters of the world, and to utter for them the word which they had long been waiting to hear. As usually happens too, this same word, once uttered, was soon abundantly repeated; spoken in all dialects,

and chanted through all notes of the gamut, till the sound of it had grown a weariness rather than a pleasure. Sceptical sentimentality, view-hunting, love, friendship, suicide and desperation, became the staple of literary ware; and though the epidemic, after a long course of years, subsided in Germany, it reappeared with various modifications in other countries, and everywhere abundant traces of its good and bad effects are still to be discerned. The fortune of 'Berlichingen with the Iron Hand,' though less sudden, was by no means less exalted. In his own country, 'Götz,' though he now stands solitary and childless, became the parent of an innumerable progeny of chivalry plays, feudal delineations, and poetico-antiquarian performances; which, though long ago deceased, made noise enough in their day and generation: and with ourselves his influence has been perhaps still more remarkable. Sir Walter Scott's first literary enterprise was a translation of 'Götz von Berlichingen: and, if genius could be communicated like instruction, we might call this work of Goethe's the prime cause of 'Marmion' and the 'Lady of the Lake,' with all that has followed from the same creative hand. Truly, a grain of seed that has lighted in the right soil! For if not firmer and fairer, it has grown to be taller and broader than any other tree; and all the nations of the earth are still yearly gathering of its fruit."

To these closing remarks we must take exception, not because of any national jealousy or hypercritical scruples, but because no ground at all is given for the assumption that Scott was influenced by the piece he translated, and if any grounds were advanced, from the evidence before us, they could not but be of an exceedingly flimsy texture. For long before Scott had even begun to study

German, his mind had found its own groove, his genius its own tone, his imagination its own field, and neither these nor his creative faculty needed any foreign fillip to furnish indications of their power. Besides, "Götz" being called the prime cause of "Marmion" looks slightly absurd when one remembers that three cantos were composed in the intervals of drill on the links of Musselburgh, before Scott had the opportunity of laying a finger on Goethe's poems, which he did, especially in the rendering of "Götz," under the eye of Mr "Monk" Lewis,—a man of insignificant size but immense importance.

We shall try to show more nearly what led to "Marmion," and Scott's other poems. About the time when "Lenore" was published, the popular poetry of Germany, more than the other departments of her literature, had a delirious fascination for the polite circles of Edinburgh a somewhat remarkable circumstance, considering that in those slow-moving days it was next to impossible, except through the good offices of personal friends on the Continent, to obtain copies of the epics and fragments with which Schiller and Goethe and Gottfried Bürger had begun to thrill the Teutonic heart. Scott himself, who had only a superficial knowledge of the language, was more fortunate than his fellows in securing almost all he desired through Mrs Scott of Harden (born Countess Brühl of Martinskirchen), and Jonathan Oldbuck (Mr George Constable), who had a useful acquaintance in Father Pepper of the Scotch College at Ratisbon. But even Scott complains that the want of books of that class greatly interrupted the progress of the translations upon which he first essayed his workmanship.

The partiality we have mentioned above was stimu-

lated if not aroused by Miss Aikin (Mrs Barbauld) by the recitation she gave at Dugald Stewart's of Mr Taylor's translation of "Lenore" (ante, page 37). Scott, who was not present, heard of this striking production from a friend, who also repeated to him the stanza:—

"Und hurre, hurre, hop, hop, Gings fort in sansendem galopp, Das Ross und Reiter schnoben, Und Kies und Funken stoben;"

and the impressive rendering by the Norwich translator:—

"Tramp, tramp, across the land they speed, Splash, splash, across the sea; Hurra, the dead can ride apace! Dost fear to ride with me?"

To the precipitate diction and ghostly incident which these words indicated, Scott, who had already become enamoured of the marvellous, mysterious, and chivalrous in the ballad poetry of all nations, was a ready victim, and, unskilled as he was in Gottfried's tongue, and undismayed by the translations already published, at once attempted to rival them by another effort, to which he started one night after supper, and which he finished at daybreak the following morning. His "Lenore" was printed in a thin quarto, along with "The Wild Huntsman," also a translation from Bürger, but owing, the author says, to the multitude of other renderings-translations by Taylor, Spencer, and Pye, for exampleproved a dead loss. This failure did not daunt him in the least; he prosecuted his German studies with renewed vigour, and speedily acquired facility in catch-

ing the force and appreciating the rhythmic flow of all the balladized traditions he could find. While admiring the statelier flights both of Goethe and Schiller, it was the homelier versification he loved, all the more that the likeness between the phraseology employed and old English, and the Scotch of the East Coast and the Lothians, came out with more tangible effect. "Glenfinlas," he says, * was the first really original poem to which these researches tended, and in it he attempted to propitiate the Gaelic models of Erin and Albyn by adopting the style of some genuine Celtic fragments. The poem, along with "The Eve of St. John"-which has its scene at Smailholm Tower, where he spent his infancy—and his previous compositions, he agreed to contribute to Mr Lewis's "Tales of Wonder;" and in his own edition of his poems, Scott gives a few specimens of the rigid accuracy which Lewis exacted from him in the matter of structure, vocables, and rhyme. On one occasion Lewis wrote to him thus:-" Does not ring his ears sound ludicrous in yours? The first idea that presents itself is, that his ears were pulled. Shower and roar not rhymes; soil and aisle not much better; but head and descried are execrable. Bar and stair are ditto; and groping is a nasty word :--

'He gropes his breeches with a monarch's air.'"

The "Tales of Wonder," published 1801, was a dead failure, partly through the inaptitude of the editor for the kind of composition he attempted, and partly through the rapacity of the publisher, who made the price exorbitant, and brought down upon the work the nick-

^{*} Essays on "Imitations of the Ancient Ballads,"

name of "Tales of Plunder." As a matter of course these defects, aggravated by the inexcusable omission of some ancient and still popular pieces, subjected the contents to severe criticism, from which, strange to say, hardly any of the articles escaped except those of Walter Scott. And it was this fortunate immunity from the slings of the mentors that encouraged him to go on to the "Minstrelsy," and test the favour of the public with a collection of his own Border seerlore.

If he had only had the spur of his own modesty we fear Scott's progress with the "Minstrelsy" would have been but slow. Not that he lacked material or felt his footing insecure, but that the fastidious delicacy of a conscientious editor, along with nice discrimination in arrangement and expression, and the reduction of his large mass of diverse incident—humours, manners, tragedies, adventures, traditions, and superstitionsto a readable form, involved him in laborious classification and annotation, and he had a positive dread that this virgin venture should fall flat on a public which had rejected the "Tales of Wonder." In the project, however, he had several distinguished coadjutors, who by this time perceived in him the promise of genius. Among others, he had the aid of Richard Heber, the mediæval scholar; John Leyden, whose prodigious learning and egotism had perplexed Edinburgh society; George Ellis, who was collecting for his specimens of Ancient English; James Hogg, the Ettrick shepherd; and Joseph Ritson, a pedantic vegetarian, to excite whose testy temper, Leyden once ate a plateful of raw flesh. Everything in short was propitious during the progress of the work; and two volumes were published in 1802—a reprint, with the addition of a third volume,

being issued in the following year. Up to 1820, when it was incorporated in his collected poetry, six thousand copies of the work were sold.

The first feeling which these ballads awoke-and especially the ancient ballads, of which there were fortythree in his collection—was one of friendly curiosity; and that in the case of any new book, is alone a pretty reliable indication of what its fate may be. Influenced we should say as much by the estimate he formed of these early performances, as by the actual facts of the case, he himself thought the reception of the work in London not so warm as his vanity desired. "The curiosity of the English," he said at the close of his life, "was not much awakened by poems in the rude garb of antiquity, accompanied with notes referring to the obscure feuds of barbarous clans, of whose very names civilized history was ignorant." After a literary life of unparalleled success, with his books selling in tens of thousands, the remark was perhaps a natural if somewhat discontented one to make; but Scott had forgotten that it was these very notes about obscure feuds, diligently collected during the raids and rambles of his youth, that gave any historic weight to his work, and were the first gleams of that vast and curious erudition with which he dignified his romances. He was a farseeing critic who said, that in those notes lay the bones of a hundred tales; and so surely did the simple narrative, the modest image, the quaint humour, the wealth of illustration and teeming anecdote, not to mention the mediæval mania that thrust itself upon you in every page -so certainly did they foreshadow the products of the same brain, that when Waverley appeared and almost convulsed criticism with conjecture, the author of the "Isle of Palms," observed, "I wonder what all these

people are perplexing themselves about: have they forgotten the *prose* of the *Minstrelsy*?"

It is right here to mention that among the only notable pieces between "Götz" and the "Minstrelsy" was "The House of Aspen," a refacciamento, which Kemble, a friend of both Scott and Jeffrey, put in rehearsal for the stage, but which, like the "Doom of Devorgoil"—a dramatic effort, sadly cobbled by Terry, another friendly actor—never was performed.

In 1805, when he had reached the age of thirty-four, and had now more serious intentions with respect to a literary life, "The Lay of the Last Minstrel," which grew out of "a wild rude legend of Border diablerie," took the world, which was not yet quite sure of him, by storm. It was more than a year after Sir John Stoddart's visit—which seems somehow to have furnished him with a subject -that the first three stanzas of the "Lay" were written; and like all inexperienced authors he resolved to secure the opinion of two intimate friends on the performance. Of these Mr Erskine was one. Their judgment on this attempt to depart from the heroic hexameters with which the literary world had for generations been saturated, and to present ancient usages and institutions in a modern garb, was not very flattering; but it appears they had on the way home talked over what Scott had read to them, and their first impressions of it, and concluded it would be worth his while to persevere in the attempt. This was consequently done, and thereafter the poem was submitted to Mr Jeffrey, whose keen critical acumen did not scruple to vouchsafe it a fitness for publication. The work accordingly appeared, and its combination of simplicity with the most diverse historical allusion, its brilliant and vivid descriptions, its ever-varying rhyme so suited to the emotion

each number expresses, and the quiet and unpretentious tone which pervaded its best parts, appealed to the widest sympathies and commanded universal admiration. It is not within our province in the meantime to allude to it in any critical way; but so pronounced was the triumph, that Scott not unwillingly decided that henceforth literature should form the main business of his life. He was the more prepared to accept this fortune since he had now an independent income of £2000 a-year. Forty-four thousand copies of the "Lay" were sold by the trade up to 1830; and even at the time of its first issue it produced to the author no less than £769.

High and low, whoever could secure a reading of the romance, were kindled with an enthusiasm which something akin to a new sensation could alone have awakened. Among the most ardent enthusiasts even the legislators of the day were not ashamed to be counted. Mr Pitt is said to have characterised the description of the old minstrel, whom Scott chose as his prolocutor, "trying to tune his harp in vain," as a thing which he might have expected in painting, but could never have fancied capable of being given in poetry; and afterwards declared it would give him pleasure to have an opportunity of advancing the fortunes of the writer.

Though he had practically resolved to forsake jurisprudence for literature, it was not without a pang that he relinquished his profession, his connection with which was now kept up only by the discharge of his shrieval and clerkly duties; nor was it, as he himself says, without certain distinct resolutions. Whatever pang he felt, however, was more inflicted by disappointment at the higher preferments being excluded from his grasp, of the choice of solicitors, and also partly by the memory that his father—dead some years—had cherished the fond hope of his son's eventual elevation to some judicial dignity. These inducements, unaided by any symptoms of legal patronage or popularity, were, of course, too slender compared with the vast field of romance which he saw fallow before him, and upon the cultivation of which his friends urged or encouraged him to enter.

But, in thus deferring to the judgment of his friends and accepting the choice of his taste, Scott made himself certain rules by which he intended the course of his career to be controlled. These rules, which would show him to have been of a more sagacious and forecasting character than the results proved, may be formulated in this condensed list.—

- 1. Never to narrow himself to literary society.
- 2. Never to consider literary pursuits the business so much as the amusement of life.
 - 3. To value true criticism, but to ignore satire.
- 4. To make literature the staff, but not the crutch of life.

To these rules he adhered in the course of his life, and near the close of it he was able to say that their effect had been to preserve him from those petty wrangles in which men of letters so often try, much to their own shame, to crush or wither rivals as well as enemies. The only occasion on which he was seriously attacked by a contemporary, was when Byron included him in "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers," and upbraided him in some waspish lines for "racking his brains for lucre, not for fame." To the taunts thus levelled at him Scott did not publicly reply until 1830, when he quietly remarked that he "could never conceive how an arrangement

between an author and his publishers, if satisfactory to the persons concerned, could afford matter of censure to any third party."

It is needless here to follow in detail the bewildering run of success which attended his subsequent poems. Suffice it to say that "Marmion," which is considered the most effective and spirited, and the "Lady of the Lake" the most refined of his poems, came out—the former in 1808, yielding him one thousand guineas, 36,000 copies being sold up to 1825—and the latter in 1810. The "Lady of the Lake" was looked forward to with the wildest expectation by the country, and the rapture with which it was received may be surmised from the circumstance, that after its publication the Post-horse Duty in Scotland began and continued to increase, on account of the multitude of visitors attracted to the grand scenery which Scott had, for the first time, adequately described. 50,000 copies were sold by 1836, and it is, we daresay, impossible to calculate how many copies have been disposed of since. Although the "Lady of the Lake" is the weaker of these two, depending almost entirely on the development of the romantic feeling for its incident, and for its power on the effective and felicitous descriptions of a new world, equally remarkable for the splendour of its scenery, the ferocity of its inhabitants, and the rudeness of their manners, there is yet in some of the numbers a sweep and vigour which, in all magnanimous and generous natures, must amount to little short of inspiration. It had this effect at all events on the soldiers to whom Sir Adam Ferguson, on the day he received the poem, read the description of the battle in Canto vi, as they lay on the lines of Torres Vedras, within range of the French arms.

The poem which succeeded "The Lady of the Lake,"

namely, "The Vision of Don Roderick," published in July 1811, was of too turgid and heavy a style, and abounded too much in the splendours of the Saracen occupation of Spain, to strike the ear of a public entirely engrossed by the astounding realities of the opening century. It met with less acclaim than any of the author's works; and it remains probably the least read of his poems to this day; but it is useful as shewing the active interest so great a man took in the exciting events of that perturbed period. It is recorded that in his journeys between Ashestiel and Edinburgh—a distance of thirty miles—he occupied himself in tracing the marches and counter-marches of the opposing hosts in the Peninsula, on a map spread out on his knee.

"Rokeby" which followed "Don Roderick" in 1813, was only a little more successful, but still successful enough to encourage the author even in a competition with Byron, the first two cantos of whose "Childe Harold" had shewn that he was no contemptible fledgling of a poet. He feared Byron might take the wind out of his sails, but not choosing to confess himself beaten, or to forsake the labour which had brought him his laurels, he persisted in his composition, and had the satisfaction of perceiving that although the Scott fever had abated, he yet ranked as a favourite with a large mass of the public. In the "Bridal of Triermain" (1813)—described as purely a tale of

"Britain's isle and Arthur's days, When midnight fairies daunced the maze"—

Scott may be said to have entered the lists against himself. The poem, which is full of the airiness of a strictly fairy and chivalric romance, was written at the request of his friend Erskine, upon condition that the authorship should be

laid at his door. Coming out about the same time as "Rokeby," a flood of comparison was inevitably poured upon the two pieces, and we may be sure that the ingenuity of the critics no less than the success of the deception, and the bold nature of the assumptions to which it gave rise, severely tickled the jocose author and the small circle to whom the secret was confided. A somewhat similar incident arose in connection with "Harold the Dauntless," published in 1817, the authorship of which was ascribed to James Hogg.

But we must here pause to take up the thread of his more personal narrative. When he became Sheriff of Selkirk, he was obliged to take up his abode within his jurisdiction; accordingly, in 1804, he selected the cottage of his relative, Major-General Sir James Russell, at Ashestiel, as his residence. Here at a distance of seven miles from the nearest town, and three from his next neighbour, surrounded by his "honest hills," beside the waters of the Tweed, and embosomed among his affectionate family, Scott first took up his literary task in earnest—for before then he had, so to say, but lisped at the infinity of the creation within him. And it may be appropriate here to indicate the habits he observed from this time forward the early hour being forced on him by increasing headaches: "Arrayed in his shooting-jacket," we are told, "or whatever dress he meant to use until dinner-time, he was seated at his desk by six o'clock, all his papers arranged before him in the most accurate order, and his books of reference marshalled around him on the floor, while at least one favourite dog lay watching his eye, just beyond the line of circumvallation. Thus, by the time the family had assembled for breakfast, between nine and ten, he had done enough, in his own language, 'to break the neck of the day's work.' After breakfast a

couple of hours more were given to his solitary tasks, and by noon he was, as he used to say, 'his own man.' When the weather was bad he would labour incessantly all the morning; but the general rule was to be out and on horseback by one o'clock at the latest; while, if any more distant excursion had been proposed overnight, he was ready to start on it by ten; his occasional rainy days of unintermittent study, forming, as he said, a fund in his favour, out of which he was entitled to draw for accommodation whenever the sun shone in special brightness." Arboriculture, and the pleasures of the chase -of which, as we have had occasion to remark, he had an inherited fondness-were his chief delights till the end of his days; the former specially so at Ashestiel and Abbotsford, where he had comparatively unadorned wilds to work upon. Abbotsford, when he removed to it in 1812, was but a bleak though sheltered mountain farm, situated near the junction of the Gala and the Tweed. Still he said he was master of all things in miniature—a little hill, and a little glen, a little horse pond of a loch, and a little river. There was also a cottage on it for a mansion when he became its owner. With what restless anxiety and invincible perseverance he applied himself to the work of beautifying the estate and building the castle, is now matter of literary history; we shall touch upon that presently. Meanwhile it is pleasant to note how his genius was refreshed, his fancy fed, and his whole frame invigorated by the occupations of his leisure. Mr Lockhart gives many pictures of the Edinburgh and Abbotsford gatherings of those days, in which Scott and his family and friends played the chief parts, and we cannot help lamenting that his unbroken domestic joy, his undimmed popularity, the even flow of literary success, and the consolations of imagination and philosophy, should not have disciplined his mind to contentment, and induced him to excel in character as well as in poetry and fiction. "I would not for much that I had been born richer," said Jean Paul. Scott never had the meekness which could say those words. In charity, purity, magnanimity, and the more passive elements of goodness he was quite an imitable man; but who could point out for the approval of his fellows the dreamy vaticinations about profits and possessions with which the routine of his life became gradually tinged? They were born of avarice and ambition, and ended in his ruin.

The steps in this the most ignominious part of his career are not at all difficult to trace. He must have had deep premeditated plans and purposes from an early stage in his career, though prior to his first great triumph. we daresay, he could be little else than a mere groper after a sign. But when success was certain, more powerful motives, which before the publication of the "Lay." had been only vague and obscure possibilities, began to sway him. When he attended the school of Mr Whale at Kelso he had a boy's intimacy with James Ballantyne, the son of a shopkeeper in that town, and who, after having failed in the law, became printer and editor of the local paper. The frequency of Scott's visits to Rosebank, the residence of an uncle at Kelso, who subsequently died and left him the property, which he sold for £,5000 to buy land with at Abbotsford, enabled the acquaintance to be kept up. As early as 1799 Ballantyne requested his old schoolfellow to contribute to his paper, a request Scott at once complied with. Admiring Ballantyne's typography Scott suggested that he should get some bookseller's work "to keep his types in play during the week," and, as a sort of trial, ordered him to print a dozen copies of three of his

minor pieces. Ballantyne executed these in such excellent style that a proposal was made that he should migrate to Edinburgh—a proposal eventually carried out. Scott believed there was an opening there for a new printing establishment, and in a letter to Ballantyne mentions, as speculations likely to succeed, if conducted by a man of talent and education, a weekly newspaper, a monthly magazine, and an annual register—ending his epistle with the significant hint that "pecuniary assistance, if wanted, might no doubt be procured on terms of a share or otherwise."

This was the first visible proof of Scott's determination to make a fortune and found a family. How this bent for aggrandizement became rooted it is not difficult to see. His nature was not specially profound—except in the application of common sense to the practical side of life—nor was it suitable for the free play of philosophic subtleties. The vices of human nature were not by any means absent, but they were represented in him chiefly by the obliquities of the mind—particularly personal and family pride. "If I have a very strong passion," says he, "it is pride;" and it was the trampling upon this special weakness that he was always the most ready to resent. For instance, shortly before the establishment of the *Quarterly Review*—started partly in consequence of the violent Whiggery of Jeffrey—he wrote: *-"Constable, or rather that Bear his partner (meaning Mr Hunter of Blackness) has behaved to me of late not very civilly, and I owe Jeffrey a flap with a fox-tail on account of his review of 'Marmion;' and thus doth the whirligig of time bring about my revenges." And yet, however bitter his disappointments, or however sharp the stings that wounded him, neither the disappointment nor the sting

^{*} Lockhart's "Life of Scott," Original Edition, Vol. ii., p. 218.

betrayed him into the infirmity of public discussion. In correspondence, however, especially in regard to the production of his works, he could be as testy and tyrannical as his temper or talents dictated. He was "hail, fellow!" with the booksellers when they concurred with him, but, if they ruffled his cavalierish spirit—as, for instance, when Murray and Blackwood proposed to retain the copyright of "Tales of My Landlord"—he professed to be the "Black Hussar" of literature, and "would stand no such treatment." In his excessive familiarity with John Ballantyne he even said, "I'll see their noses cheese first!"

Rejected by solicitors as a pleader, what was more natural than that he should turn from the bar with stung pride, and say, as the Alchemyst said to Madame Thomas:—"Madame, I am now a fiddle to asses, but I am in the midst of a work which will make those asses fiddle to me." Courted and flattered by nobles, whose society his haughty tastes cherished, and himself a member of a respectable sept, why should he not annihilate or minimise the outward distinctions between him and the lords and ladies who proudly owned his friendship? For Fame was little to him, and the friendship of princes not much, if he could not carry his renown and meet and feed his princes in the garb of a patrician. The enthusiasm of his childhood had been spent on the exploits of his ancestors; and with his copious flow of life, his reckless courage and undaunted nerve—(he never felt abashed in any presence but that of the Duke of Wellington, and he could sleep in peace and contentment in the same room with a corpse)—he seemed to regret that the opportunities were lost of proving that their descendant could have been, as well as they-

> "A hedge about his friends, A heckle to his foes."

The child being thus father to the man, and there being no counteractives in the shape of high-strung spirituality, or etherealized poesy, the merging of those ideal notions into the acquisitiveness and ambition of a man of the world was sequentially inevitable.

"He had long before this," says Lockhart,* "cast a shrewd and penetrating eye over the field of literary enterprise, and developed in his own mind the outline of many extensive plans which wanted nothing but the command of a sufficient body of subalterns to be carried into execution with splendid success." But how was he to square professional etiquette with commercial enterprise? had found his quarry; he had begun to work it; his wisdom taught him that he and the "competent subalterns" might as well pocket the profits which the publishers could squeeze out of him; but since king James VI. founded the University and the College of Justice, professional Edinburgh had eschewed the bare smell of trade, as something which must not infect their garments on any account. And how was he to overcome such deeply-rooted prejudices? With the bar especially this had been one of the fondest of traditions. It is a marked feature of Edinburgh Society even to this day. We have heard of the son of a divine being excluded from circles, where his younger but professional brother was welcome, merely on the ground that he was a tradesman. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that Walter Scott, a Clerk of Session, and a Sheriff, should have hesitated to encounter the storm of obloquy which a degrading alliance with types must raise against him. In short, the only way to overcome these petty prejudices was, he thought, the establishment of a cabalistic concern of which he would be the hidden brain.

^{*} Life, abridged.

The upshot was that, in 1802, James Ballantyne removed to Edinburgh, Scott giving him the loan of £500 to start with, and helping him otherwise in securing work, &c. The business prospered, and, in 1805, Scott secretly became a partner, stipulating with his publishers that his works should be printed at the Ballantyne press. Then, in consequence of disputes with Constable three years later, the firm of which Scott was a partner was erected into an opposing publishing house, with the *Quarterly* as a rival to the *Edinburgh Review*; and John Ballantyne, a younger brother of James, and a bankrupt tailor of Kelso, as manager of the publishing department.

This was the grand and initial blunder of Scott's life. A sleeping partnership in a successful printing concern he might safely have risked, but it is impossible to conceive how a man, with a shadow of shrewdness, could have selected the bibulous remains of a village merchant to oppose the intelligence, discrimination, and craftiness of Archibald Constable, then said to be the ablest of British publishers, except on the ground that John Ballantyne, alias "Joking Johnnie," alias "Rigdumfunnidos," flattered Scott as his patron, and rushed with the ardour of a parasitic enthusiast into the rash schemes which Scott's inexperience fathered.

Into the conduct of the Ballantynes we do not intend to enter. James, if a little indolent, acted uprightly. He acquiesced in all that the genius suggested; and printing and acquiescence were all that Scott's temper exacted. But to the mismanagement of John Ballantyne, and the caprice of Scott, the misfortunes of the firm were undoubtedly due. "The large sums received," says James Ballantyne, "were all expended by the partners, who being then young and sanguine men, not unwillingly adopted my brother's hasty results." In short, in four

years from the erection of the house, it tumbled ignominiously—being rescued for a time from the complexity of its entanglements by Constable, the very man whom it was designed to check.

Archibald Constable's literary correspondence throws light on the perturbed spirit with which Scott faced his first commercial disaster, and the eagerness with which he sought to stem the tide of ruin, and yet amid the beggary of his commercial hopes to build up the Scott fabric, and still increase his acres. The quaintness, the warmth, the rich anecdote of his literary correspondence, the feasts of intellect which his festive board attracted, the brilliant range of his acquaintance, his simple and kindly familiarity with his menials—these are all shaded in their lustre, and dimmed in their effect, when looked at alongside his business communications, exhibiting as these do a mind ever at tension through the exigencies of wild speculation in books and land - a gambling spirit utterly inconsistent with the probity and earnestness of the genuine man of letters. It was not merely that he was diligent in business: he had a constant hunger for money to buy him more of the prop of the country gentleman, and, in this way, his genius was made the handmaiden of a passion so ravenous that even "cocklairds" flouted in his face patches of land adjoining his farm, at notoriously ruinous terms, which his cupidity was powerless to resist. Moreover, great as his gains had been, half the price of Abbotsford, £,4000, had to be borrowed from his brother, and the other half raised on the security of a poem entirely unwritten. To the enlarging and beautifying of this place which, when he bought it, had but a dilapidated cottage for a mansion, Scott consecrated his talent. The collection of nick-nackets with which the young virtuoso garnished his father's

"den," had by this time swelled to considerable dimensions, so that "our removal to Ashestiel," he said, "baffled all description; we had twenty-five cartloads of the veriest trash in nature,"—amongst which trash were old swords, bows, targets and lances, banners and muskets. Indeed, the augmenting of his antiquarian store seemed to be the second object of his devotion.

Though such were now the avowed purposes of his career, the inherent manliness of his character must not be lost sight of, nor the schemes, praiseworthy enough in their aim, he was constantly concocting to avert the disasters which his indiscretion had originated. For instance, when rescued by Constable from trouble we find him writing: "I shall be ready to start strong in scenery, if that will do good;" and again, "by the way, I have a great lot of the register ready for delivery, and no man asks for it. I shall want to pay up some cash at Whitsunday, which will make me draw on my brains." His correspondence abounds with such passages, and while they show that he had no very exalted conception of the dignity or sacredness of genius, they should not be accepted as anything but characteristic expressions of his resolve to pay off debt. For it is no slander to say that he was perpetually in debt. Yet he was constantly fighting to free himself of the incubus; and the brisk spirits, amiable temper, and lively humour which he maintained in the worst of his difficulties, are beyond all praise. We have said that, although never quite quit of obligation, his brain was stuffed with honest intentions. "I have hungered and thirsted," he wrote in 1818, "to see the end of those shabby borrowings among friends. They have all been wiped out except the good Duke's (Buccleuch) £,4000, and I will not suffer either new offers of lands, or anything else, to come in the way of that clearance." That was a hopeful state of matters, he thought; but through the carelessness of John Ballantyne, Scott had been kept in ignorance of many of the responsibilities under which himself and his firm laboured. Of course that did not absolve him from blame for a negligent interest in his affairs, or for his greed of land; indeed he must be held in the main responsible for the incompetence and mercenary astuteness of the "funny man" whom, we think, he had rashly trusted. In 1817, writing to Mr Constable, he says, "I shall want only £,4000, unless I buy more land; but if I do this desperate deed, simple acceptances will serve for the odd £,1000, stipulated to be payable at Martinmas, if required. My neighbour, Nicol Milne, is mighty desirous I should buy at a mighty high rate, some land between me and the lake, which lies mighty convenient, but I am mighty determined to give nothing more than the value, so that it is likely to end like the old proverb, 'ex Nichilo nihil fit.'" In July 1819, speaking of some bills falling due, he says, "These engagements are now much restricted, and only exist from my extensive purchase of land." Carlyle said, "Walter Scott, one of the gifted of the world, whom his admirers call the most gifted, must kill himself that he may be a country gentleman, the founder of a race of Scottish lairds." That we humbly think hits the nail on the head. It is unnecessary for us to detail the transactions to which the above quotations refer; we give them merely to show the craze in the author's mind to be a man of possessions, and illustrate the events which in the end hopelessly entrammelled him.

To resume his literary history: In 1814, after a voyage round Scotland, he strove to regain lost favour with "The Lord of the Isles," for the copyright of which Constable paid 1500 guineas. Though a much more

powerful work than its immediate predecessors, and wearing a potent charm in the name of Bruce, it is lame compared with his first achievements; and, in a letter written some time afterwards to the Countess Purgstall, which, for some reason, was never forwarded, he acknowledged the prudence of giving way before the more forcible and powerful genius of Byron. But about the time of his great necessity in 1812-13-14, he fortunately struck upon the richest vein of his genius. He has himself described the origin of "Waverley." In his youthful excursions into the Highlands, he had met some of the veterans of 1745. He had long desired to write a tale on that subject, and, in 1805, threw together a third part of the first volume of "Waverley." Owing to the adverse opinion of Mr James Ballantyne, it was laid aside in a lumber garret, and forgotten until years afterwards, when searching for some fishing-tackle, Scott stumbled upon the manuscript. Mr Erskine's opinion being favourable, he set to work and completed it, according to the original design, in three weeks. Messrs Constable were glad to publish this new effort. Issued in 1814, it had an unparalleled "run." No name appeared on the title-page, or on any other of the author's works until 1825—his motive for publishing anonymously being the consciousness that the prose romance was an experiment, which might probably fail, and he did not wish to imperil by failure the reputation he already enjoyed. This is his own account of it, and so far it must be true. We have already shown, however, that he had powerful inducements to secrecy in the matter of his partnership. Reverence for legal caste and aristocratic prejudice, as some one has observed, made him look askance at an advocate and country gentleman writing and printing for fortune. Established families would regard those things

as blemishes on his escutcheon, although even the Earl of Hopetoun has his ancestor in an Edinburgh merchant.

In a short time, nevertheless, twelve thousand copies of "Waverley" were sold. It is needless, and we lack the space, to describe the rapidity with which the author repeated the experiment. The result was what London called the "Scotch novels"—a name to which Byron took exception, seeing that two were English, and the rest half so.* "Waverley" was succeeded by "Guy Mannering," in 1815; "The Antiquary," "The Black Dwarf," and "Old Mortality," in 1816; "Rob Roy" and "The Heart of Midlothian," in 1818; and "The Bride of Lammermoor" and "The Legend of Montrose," in 1819. In order to insure a stricter incognito, and test public taste, Scott then issued "Tales by my Landlord," as if by another's pen. In 1820 "Ivanhoe" appeared, and the "Monastery" and "The Abbot" in the course of the same year; "Kenilworth," in 1821; "The Pirate" and "The Fortunes of Nigel," in 1822; "Peveril of the Peak" and "Quentin Durward," in 1823; "St Ronan's Well" and "Redgauntlet," in 1824; the "Tales of the Crusaders," in 1825; "Woodstock," in 1826; "Chronicles of the Canongate," in 1827-28; "Anne of Geierstein," in 1829; and "Count Robert of Paris" and "Castle Dangerous," in 1831. Nearly all the novels consisted of three volumes each, so that in twenty years, Scott produced, of fiction alone, upwards of seventy volumes! These, however, did not represent the whole of his works. While digging chiefly in the garden of imagination, he loved occasionally to make a raid among the rough furrows of fact. He contributed to the Edinburgh and Quarterly Review; for the "Encyclopædia Britannica," he wrote "Chivalry," "Romance," and the "Drama;"

^{*} Byron to Scott, January 12, 1822.

in 1814 he edited Swift, and wrote Swift's life; in 1815, after a visit to the great battlefields, "Paul's Letters to his Kinsfolk;" and in the course of that and the succeeding year, numberless snatches and patches, besides a mass of diversified correspondence.

There are few now alive who remember the prodigious sensation produced by these creations of this mastermagician. The pleasure with which people listened to "Waverley" was perpetuated by each of its successors, until the virtue that dwelt in the wizard's wand began to ebb with the ebbing fortunes of its bearer. The country was filled with wild speculations as to the authorship of the brilliant series which elicited thunders of applause, awakened universal curiosity, and struck out a new departure for its literature. Screened from the public by a strictly-guarded pseudonym, the author looked out from his secrecy upon the tumult -for it can be described as nothing else-with keen enjoyment. Yet, where most men would have been delirious with joy, or become grotesquely conceited, or have rushed into hurried disclosures that they were the heroes of the hubbub, Scott, true to his plans and his aims, sat still in his satisfaction, his face the while wearing only a quiet, pleased smile. The mystery in which the whole affair was shrouded no doubt had a decided relish for him; we cannot help surmising with what quiet merriment he must have scanned the reverential epithets of "The Great Unknown," and "The Wizard of the North," &c., &c., by which he was described. It never entered into his head, we fancy, that he was anything very bold or obvious in what philosophers had labelled true greatness, breadth of mind, depth of scholarship, magnanimity of soul, or saintliness of life. We rather think he viewed his fortune as, if anything, purely adventitious, and an extremely useful and honourable thing in the way of working out his predetermined theories of greatness and happiness. We don't know, however, but it may have been well for him that he had these mild conceptions of his character. They enabled him to pursue his course, undisturbed by any glorious visions of his own genius, and to carry out the sensible resolutions with which he started on his career. It is not surprising therefore that throughout his life we never find egotism developing from an overstrained sense of his importance, or this springing out of his splendid success, or out of the high idea of his work which often leads the literary man astray.

When the secret came to be divulged, the manner in which Scott comported himself towards his friends and the public was entirely consistent with his purpose and principles. If there was any difference at all, it was seen only in increased urbanity. He was the object of universal veneration; his works were more popular than those of any other author; his leisure was adorned by the noblest writers of his time; his house was as great a resort of strangers and foreigners as was ever shrine to pilgrim. The intellect of his country flattered him, princes and nobles courted him, and to them, as well as to the hillside peasants, he was the liberal dispenser of entirely new pleasures-for no writer had yet succeeded so well as he in presenting pictures of the human sympathies with such little alloy of vice. Yet, in the reddest blush of his success he preserved the mien of modesty, the tone of urbanity, and the singleness of a fresh and unsophisticated nature, as well as the firmness and steadiness of the inflexible worker.

It would be tiresome to dwell upon the honours which were showered upon him by his countrymen and strangers. There are few who will say that any

honours he got were undeserved, either in respect of intellectual endowment or moral qualities. Certainly Scotland has no reason to grudge him his laurels, even if he had written no more than "The Lady of the Lake," in which he painted the hills and lochs of his native land, and captivated the world by the romance which he crowded into sequestered and unknown valleys -compelling the admiration, to say nothing of the "custom"—of those who had kept aloof from Caledonia as from a bleak and semi-barbarous province. He did for the Highlands what his school-fellow, Brougham, did for Cannes, and both places are equally grateful. But his laurels were not gathered in Scotland only. English-speaking people found that a new master had arisen, and they worshipped accordingly. It may be sufficient to state that among the most eminent of his admirers was King George IV., with whom he had become intimate as Prince Regent, and on whom he conferred the distinction of repeated interviews. The king, in March 1820, made him the first baronet of his creation—a big stride towards the realisation of his most cherished dreams. When his Majesty visited Scotland two years afterwards, the arrangements for his reception were carried out chiefly under Sir Walter's supervision. On casting anchor in Leith Roads, Sir Walter, deputed by the ladies of Scotland, went out to present him with a jewelled St Andrew's Cross, to be worn as a national emblem. The king being informed of Sir Walter's approach, exclaimed,—"What! Sir Walter Scott! the man in Scotland I most wished to see! Let him come up." The meeting is said to have been a cordial one; and Sir Walter knelt before and kissed the hand of his profligate monarch.

Sir Walter had now reached an eminence at which one

might have expected him to be contented and happy: that he was not, is but another testimony to the futility of those lives which set before themselves the accomplishment of false aims, and involve the use of false means. He was never content, and therefore he was not happy. He amassed immeasurably more than had ever fallen to the lot of literary men. Of temperate habits, and with plenty of foresight, and not, like Goldsmith, too liberal, he ought surely to have provided against any adversity which might impend. But the worst of it was, that, with a blindness which entirely perplexes us, he had failed to secure himself from the consequences of the previous disaster. Up to 1824 he had got acceptances of large amounts on the security of works to be written; counter acceptances were granted to the bookselling house when it became embarrassed; moreover, he incurred liabilities to Constable's creditors to the amount of £,72,000. After Constable had remonstrated with him for the extent of the accommodation given to the Ballantynes, and when Constable's relations with the banks were beginning to be strained, through difficulties with his London agent, we find Sir Walter writing in his diary:-" The general distress in the city has affected Hurst & Robinson, Constable's great agents. Should they go, it is not likely that Constable can stand, and such an event would lead to great distress and perplexity on the part of James Ballantyne and myself. I had a lesson in 1814 which should have done good, but success and abundance erased it from my mind." Messrs Constable and Cadell continued to struggle with their position, which became more and more precarious. Various London publishers had launched themselves into reckless speculations in joint stock companies, and come to grief, and their difficulties precipitated, if they did not cause Constable's

failure. On the 18th December 1825, Sir Walter writes in his journal:—"I have about £,10,000 of Constable's for which I am bound to give literary value, but if I am obliged to pay other debts for him, I will take leave to retain this sum at his credit. We shall have made some kittle questions of literary property among us. Once more, patience, and shuffle the cards." But the ingenuity of Constable and the diplomacy of his partner failed. Their house came down in January 1826, and Ballantyne & Company failed too, their debts amounting to £,102,000, for which sum Sir Walter was liable. The prospect thus presented to him was one which might have staggered a stouter heart, but after the first day or two he bore the blow with extreme magnanimity. Writing to William Laidlaw he says :- "The confusion of 1814 was a joke to this, but it arises out of the connection which has given me a fortune, and, therefore, I am not entitled to grumble." Two noblemen, of whom the Duke of Somerset was one, offered to advance £,30,000each to the author of "Waverley;" the creditors agreed among themselves to accept a composition; but the greatest writer of his age, setting adversity at defiance, replied with the Spanish proverb-"No, gentlemen! Time and I against any two. Allow me time, and I will endeavour to pay all." Admitting it was hard to lose the labours of a lifetime thus, he set to work in the most heroic manner to erase the blot which, if he had not done so, must have rested upon his name. This Herculean task and manly aim, heroically done and nobly won, seem to us to form the truest part of his career. Nothing in it shows the sterling stuff at the heart of him like this. The man who had amassed a fortune, raised a castle, consolidated an estate, and was in a fair way to found a family-who had spent his life on a

selfish hobby—when struck at a blow from his pinnacle of affluence, looked on his misfortunes with matchless magnanimity, and, contrary to all bankruptcy precedent, declared that every farthing *must* be paid, though his life were not blessed with a copper more. He went into an eclipse which, for him, never wore off.

Trustees were appointed, who received the funds accruing to his labours. His life was insured for £22,000, which would go to the creditors in case of his death. Lady Scott, who affected to treat the disaster with a light heart, had been in failing health for some time, and at last, in May 1826, some months after the worst became known, sank under the calamity. Perhaps in his whole biography nothing is more tender than the picture of the ruined, well-nigh broken-hearted man, visiting the sick couch of his wife every morning before he went to the labours of the day, now no more a pleasure but a hard and harassing toil:—

"Abbotsford, May II (1826).— . . . It withers my heart to think of it, and to recollect that I can hardly hope again to seek confidence and counsel from that ear, to which all might be safely confided. But in her present lethargic state, what would my attendance have availed?—and Anne has promised close and constant intelligence. I must dine with James Ballantyne today en famille. I cannot help it; but would rather be at home and alone. However, I can go out too. I will not yield to the barren sense of hopelessness which struggles to invade me.

"May 15.—Received the melancholy intelligence that all is over at Abbotsford.

"Abbotsford, May 16.—She died at nine in the morning, after being very ill for two days—easy at last. I arrived here late last night. Anne is worn out, and has

had hysterics, which returned on my arrival. Her broken accents were like those of a child, the language as well as the tones broken, but in the most gentle voice of submission. 'Poor mamma—never return again—gone forever—a better place.' Then, when she came to herself, she spoke with sense, freedom, and strength of mind, till her weakness returned. It would have been inexpressibly moving to me as a stranger—what was it then to the father and the husband? For myself, I scarce know how I feel; sometimes as firm as the Bass Rock, sometimes as weak as the water that breaks on it. I am as alert at thinking and deciding as I ever was in my life. Yet, when I contrast what this place now is, with what it has been not long since, I think my heart will break. Lonely, aged, deprived of my family—all but poor Anne; an impoverished, an embarrassed man, deprived of the sharer of my thoughts and counsels, who could always talk down my sense of the calamitous apprehensions which break the heart that must bear them alone.—Even her foibles were of service to me, by giving me things to think of beyond my weary self-reflections.

"May 18.— . . . Cerements of lead and of wood already hold her; cold earth must have her soon. But it is not my Charlotte, it is not the bride of my youth, the mother of my children, that will be laid among the ruins of Dryburgh, which we have so often visited in gaiety and pastime. No, no." "This," says Carlyle, "is beautiful as well as tragical."

The remaining events of his life may be briefly told. Sir Walter, at the time of his bankruptcy, was engaged upon a life of Napoleon, for which he went to France to collect materials. He was received there with distinction by Charles X. The work was written with extraordinary rapidity, and appearing in the summer of 1827,

was understood to produce £12,000. Other earnings speedily came in, and he was soon enabled to pay a dividend of 6s. 8d.

In the midst of these events a formal disclosure of the authorship of the "Waverley Novels" was made at a dinner for the benefit of the Edinburgh Theatrical Fund, on February 23rd, 1827, by Lord Meadowbank proposing "the health of the 'Great Unknown,'" by which title, borrowed in some measure from the "Unknown" in "Redgauntlet," he had, as already hinted, come to be named. Scott replied in suitable terms, and with becoming modesty.

The copyright of his novels was bought by Mr Robert Cadell, the partner of Mr Constable, for £8,400, the intention being to reissue the whole series in a cheap edition, with notes, &c., by the author. The creditors were to have half the profits in return for Sir Walter's work. The project was a lucrative one. About 1000 persons were engaged in the production of the work, and the sale soon reached an average of 23,000 copies. Various publications followed, the names of the principal of which are given above, and the profits enabled an additional dividend of 3s to be paid. But for the interest which accumulated in the meantime, the half of the enormous debt would, by this time, have been wiped off, which shows the income from his pen alone to have been £,10,000 a year—an unparalleled revenue in the annals of literature. It may be here mentioned that of the £,54,000 still to pay, £,22,000 was secured by the insurance on his life. On the 21st February 1833, Mr Cadell advanced the balance of £, 30,000 on security of Sir Walter's copyrights; and, in May 1847, he gave a discharge in full of all claims, so that the burden was absolutely cleared away fifteen years after the great novelist's death.

The effort succeeded at the expense of his life. Since his youth he had enjoyed exceptional health, his only illness being in 1818-19. The cramp was then so severe, however, that his hair turned quite white. His incessant toil, of which some idea may be gathered from his punctually discharging official duties, and at the same time producing sixteen pages of printed matter daily, developed symptoms of gradual paralysis in the winter of 1830. In 1831 his symptoms became more alarming, and his temperament changed from a delightfully amiable to a frequently testy one; and but for a letter or two his pen became entirely inactive. In a letter dated March 7, 1831, he says—"Dr Abercromby threatens me with death if I write so much, and die I suppose I must if I give it up suddenly. . . . After all, this same dying is a ceremony one would put off as long as possible." A residence in Italy was recommended, but he had rarely left his native land in search of foreign pleasure, and it is characteristic of the man that he should now have quailed at a journey which involved the risk of dying on strange soil. His scruples having been overcome, he sailed from Portsmouth on 27th October, in one of the king's ships, and landed at Naples on 27th December. Here it is said, "he was received by the King and his Court with a feeling approaching to homage." Demonstrations of a similar character were made at Rome, Tivoli, Albani, Frescati, and at other places where he sojourned. But the journey was unavailing. No strength was gained by the tour, which would doubtless have given him the keenest pleasure in health. The relish with which he viewed the remains of Pagan grandeur was altogether vapid compared with the zest which marked his young days among the Border peels. felt that the end was not far off; and at his own request

the homeward journey was begun; but so anxious was he that he should die amid the beloved scenes surrounding his "mountain farm," that the speed with which he urged on his friendly escort exceeded all discretion, and he had a severe attack of paralysis on the Rhine which still further prostrated him. In London, it was found by eminent physicians that help was useless; and after a lapse of some weeks he was conveyed by sea to Newhaven and thence to Abbotsford. The particulars of this last journey are beautifully described by his biographer-"He lay in the same torpid state during the first two stages on the road to Tweedside, but as we descended the Vale of the Gala he began to gaze about him, and it was obvious that he was recognising the features of that familiar landscape. Presently he murmured a name or two, 'Gala Water, surely - Buckholm - Torwoodlee.' As we mounted the hill at Ladhope and the outlines of the Eildons burst on him, he became greatly excited, and when, turning himself on the couch, his eye caught at length his own towers at the distance of a mile, he sprang up with a cry of delight. It required both Dr Watson's strength and mine, in addition to Nicholson's, to keep him in the carriage. . . . Mr Laidlaw was waiting at the porch, and assisted us in lifting him into the dining room, where his bed had been prepared. He sat bewildered for a few moments, and then resting his eve on Laidlaw said—'Ha! Willie Laidlaw! O man how often have I thought of you.' By this time his dogs had assembled about his chair—they began to fawn upon him and lick his hands, and he alternately sobbed and smiled over them until sleep oppressed him."

He lingered in life all the autumn. Mr Lockhart relates numerous affecting incidents which occurred during the last moments. "As I was dressing," he says, "on the morning of Monday, 17th September, Nicholson told me his master wished to see me immediately. His eye was clear and calm—every trace of the wild fire of delirium extinguished. 'Lockhart,' he said, 'I may have but a minute to speak to you. My dear, be a good man—be virtuous—be religious—be a good man. Nothing else will give you any comfort when you come to lie here.' He gradually sank until half-past one." And on the 21st September 1832, which is described as a beautiful, warm day, he fell asleep, surrounded by his family, having lived a year longer than his own calculations had given him reason to hope.

The newspapers announced his death in mourning, and "with hardly an exception the voice was that of universal unmixed grief and veneration." On the 26th he was buried in the aisle at Dryburgh, which had belonged to one of his ancestors, and it is enough to say in regard to the funeral that the procession was over a mile in length.

So ended a career altogether new in the nature of its work, unique in its success, and deplorable in its failure. It would be trite to say that the fruit of such rare and teeming genius as Scott's is of the hesperian kind; and affectation to bring it within the scope of criticism here further than merely to indicate its general characteristics. As the pioneer in an endless track of fiction, the register of the past, and the missal of romance, it has enriched our literature with imperishable treasures, given solace to the antiquary, and stimulus to the historian, and ennobled the most generous sympathies of the race. Nobody has ever questioned or will ever question the power of his novels. They conquered when they came, escaping the sharp criticism which a less brilliant reception ensures. But they refresh the scholar, the physician, and

the man of business as much as ever they did; and in the sick-room they are welcome as the breath of flowers. Then with what matchless purity they have been written. In whom could they ever excite the least streak of a blush, or suggest the shadow of an evil thought? We humbly think that in the innocuousness of their characters, they still stand unrivalled among the mass of fiction with which our libraries are flooded.

That Scott was the mechanic of his genius or that genius was the slave of his pride, takes nothing from the inherent value of his work. His life was apart altogether from his creations; and we should say no one was more puzzled to explain their immediate and immense popularity than he was himself, though we now know that it was in the glamour of romance and the haze of antiquity hanging round every sentence-in the witchery of which ether by a strange unforced subtlety he enwrapped his reader—that his most potent charms lay. Besides, the time wanted the man and the man came-came to a clear field. Had he come now, with all the gauze of his hoary trappings, he would have had to encounter vastly greater coldness and unconcern. His plots are not of the modern kind; the reader is never made to caracole past hobgoblins and murders to the abyss of the catastrophe; the most of his characters are grand public men and women—the incident history manipulated; and every creature of his creation appears before us in drapery that hangs gracefully together. Goethe* repeatedly commends this feature in Scott, and admired as unique the subtle charm—it cannot be called skill—which made characters merge imperceptibly from high tragedy into side-scene and side-play.

Describing the manners of past ages, Scott himself can

* "Eckermann's Conversations,"

never be identified or confounded with any of his princely personalities. He takes us back to the time and the spot, and puts the pigment on before our eyes. His drawing is none the worse because of its elaborateness, or because precision is not greatly studied. Every face has its clear outline and fitting complexion; and his respect for the reader makes him put his own spectacles out of the way, when his work is done, and say, "There it is, sir; take your own view."

You can't mistake the colour of the pantouffles, the shape of the ruffles, or the turn of the shoe. The only things he borrowed from the present were his faces. He went about picking up nineteenth century men and set them adrift in the middle ages. His lover's face appears in three places; Erskine was Dairsie Latimer; Miss Cranstoun, Die Vernon; Laidlaw, Dandie Dinmont; and M'Guffog, a witness in the tipsy minister's case, figures along with Dirk Hatteraick in "Guy Mannering." Rarely, however, does he draw on his own experience, except, perhaps, in the matters of beauty, horsemanship, and honour. He would have fought a duel with General Gourgaud, if the General had challenged him as he expected for a political disclosure in the "History of Napoleon." Mr Hutton truly says, he did himself what he would have made his heroes do. He is like none of his successors, who all deal with the intense present, and intense reality. Said Carlyle: "Your Shakespere fashions his characters from the heart outwards; your Scott fashions them from the skin inwards, never getting near the heart of them." The justice of this judgment has been only feebly impugned. It is because he seldom gets near the heart, and seldom felt the dreadful poignancy of intense emotions, bitter experiences, and the tearing conflicts of the inner world, that his endless romance is endlessly

entertaining. His men and women, like himself, lived in grand baronial residences, and, like him, they have much heart, a good deal of brain, but very little soul, and none of the over-soul. He had little dissective or analytic power, and never concealed his inaptitude for the domestic picture: "The big bow-wow strain I can do myself like any now going, but the exquisite touch which renders ordinary commonplace things and characters interesting, from the truth of the description and the sentiment, is denied me." The religious novel, too, he would probably have scouted, for his views on sacred themes were but sparingly expressed; and the impression one gathers from his works strengthens the suspicion that his choice between a rosy prior and an ascetic puritan would probably have lain with the monk. Indeed, his religion, while, for aught we see, it was perfectly sincere, and practical so far as it went, was a little formal, conventional, and apathetic. George MacDonald's heresies and spiritual Presbyterians would have perplexed him. The philosophy of George Eliot was immeasurably beyond him; as also was Thackeray's philosophic satire and moral thoughtfulness; in short, he seems to have joined in the comical couplet of Walter de Mapes:

"Mysterious and prophetic truths I never could unfold 'em."

He dearly loved a joke, and wrote many, but, as a class, they are of a decidedly lumbering kind. He had neither the crisp humour nor the exquisite pathos of Dickens. Yet his style, full of adroit grace, and always plump and round, easily eludes the imitator. Often redundant and elephantine, there is freshness even in the redundancy itself. He always wrote without throes, the result being a full and easy flow. The mere plot gave him little

trouble; he arranged the heads and plans of chapters, while he dressed or superintended the planting of his trees; and if the printers pressed for copy, his composition was all the more free and swift that something goaded him on. We daresay it might be said of him that of all ready-writers he was the only one whom Sheridan would have excepted when he said "Easy writing is sometimes very hard reading."

Reviewing the events of his life, his memory ranks first as a factor in his fame. Without great originality, he came upon Scotland just when it required a collector and annotator. The stories his grandmother told him he was obliged, by his tenacious memory, to "pouch." He fleeced every idiot of his oddities, put them in his pack. and afterwards turned them out in gold. Nor did legal pleasantry nor family history escape him. "He was makin' himsel' a' the time," said Mr Shortreed, "he maybe didna' ken what he was about till years had passed: at first he thought o' little, I daresay, but the queerness and the fun." We know of no better characterisation than that. Perfect in the arts of assimilation, his growth was correspondingly enormous; and we have the fruits of his memory, assimilation and growth, in books that will last as long as the language. We suspect the gradual growth of his intellect is a somewhat significant commentary on the theory of native genius; and thus, for those who desire to look at the springs of his life, it is important to notice the part which his memory plays: for, in the memory and veneration with which Heaven gifted him, his greatness seems to have been grounded; and young people especially should not forget this lesson.

While the charm of the novels lies mainly in the romance and their curious lore, that of the poems lies in the romance and the stately march of the cadence. There

were no early indications in him of any divine afflatus; indeed, but for his early leaning to Spencer, and Percy, and the lilts and pæans of border freebooters, there was no presage of poetry or even of rhyme. He was attracted to the old "wells" of the language, not so much by the fire of the masters, as by gorgeous equipage, pretty women, steeled and buckramed knights, and the fabulous exploits of these fine creatures. Certainly, even at the High School, he had proved himself not a bad translator, as "My Walter's first lines, 1782," shew:—

"In awful ruins Ætna thunders nigh,
And sends, in pitchy whirlwinds, to the sky
Black clouds of smoke, which, still as they aspire,
From their dark sides there bursts the glowing fire;
At other times huge balls of fire are toss'd,
That lick the stars, and in the smoke are lost."

This is positively creditable in a mere child, and shows that he could trick out narrative in agreeable rhyme. It was the memory of this, after the publication of "Lenore," that encouraged him to attempt something more ambitious; and if, in those early days, he had studied the art of versification, and reduced his promiscuous load of lore to so many ballads and rondos, the partial biographer would doubtless have had those prognostics of genius to garnish his story with, for which he has had to search in vain.

He began at Kelso to foster friendship with nature. No doubt his acquaintance with his "grey honest hills" began early, and before he had seen the Tweed. His grandfather's shepherd used to carry him to the heathery knowes beside Smailholm, and his infirmity rendering him all but impotent, he could do little else than wonderingly regard the earth, the sheep, and the sky; and we

daresay could distinguish little between a sheep and a hillock, except that the one emitted a sound while the other was silent. At Kelso, however, a romantic village surrounded by tall woods and fertile fields, where the Tweed and the Teviot join and go wedded to the sea, he began to feel the throb of nature, to pulse in unison with her, and to pluck wild delights in the subtle harmony of her silence and solitude—pleasures which neither sorrow can blunt nor age destroy. Yet he never drank so deeply as Shelley or Byron; or, perhaps, the draught was less intoxicating on his robuster frame. To use his own terms, his poetry "heats the head in which it runs," as it heated Thomas Campbell's, whom the cabmen of Edinburgh knew by his murmured recitation of—

"Dark Morton, girt with many a spear,
Murder's foul minion, led the van,
And clashed their broadswords in the rear,
The wild Macfarlane's plaided clan,"

and the stamp of the feet and shake of the head with which he kept time to the martial music. It had a fiery simplicity and "hurried frankness" about it which swept away the hostility of the captious and critical. Pitt said the effect of it was such as he might have expected in painting, but could never have fancied capable of being given in poetry; and this is perhaps the predominant, if unconscious feeling, with which one reads the "Lay" and "Marmion." There is a tuneful march about the descriptions, all the more wonderful when one remembers that Scott had little or no musical ear, and was only once heard to sing. But of the magical subtlety of the poet's bend he never knew anything.

He was an enthusiast none the less for all that. He got his book and fondled his knights and moss-troopers

in a tree, on a hillside, or in an arbour, and always felt himself in the chorus; but within the ecstatic whirl of the great singers he was never admitted. He constructed a reading seat in a tree which overhung the Tweed; and it is characteristic of him, with his hereditary sportsmanship, that he cut an embrasure among the boughs, carried his gun with him, and shot at the wild-ducks as they passed. We all allow the vast things he did for Scotland, but he was proud of her beauty pretty much in the same way as the naturalist is proud of his collection. He was never done with the loveliness of her lakes, the grandeur of her hills, the sweep of her rivers; yet we cannot deny that the tawdry inventory style of the lawyer peers out of his catalogue of splendours. He loved his country with a patriot's love. "To me," he said, "the wandering over the field of Bannockburn was a source of more exquisite pleasure than gazing upon the celebrated landscape from the battlements of Stirling Castle." There was not much of the poet there. Perhaps if it had not been for what Byron called the fatal facility of the octosyllabic rhyme, it is questionable if his verse would ever have exceeded the mediocrity of mere going ballad-songs. His pleasure in the country was that of a sportsman and antiquary; and we have seen how he explored every valley in quest of moss-grown walls, and how he ransacked homestead and hall for the charming ditties embodied in his novels and in the "Minstrelsy." As we have said, had he done naught else, he would still have deserved the praise of his countrymen, for he headed a noble list of musty savans, who like Michel, Petitot Reynouard, and De la Rue in France, snatched numberless gems from the grave of the unremembered. And to these antiquarian functions his predilections destined as his desultory education fitted him.

Next to his untainted integrity, perhaps the most lovable traits were his amiability and kindness. In some earlier concerns, it is true, his ideas of honour squared singularly well with his prospects and partialities. He was ashamed of his trade-connection: that, of course, was set down to a love of the mysterious. He made drafts on the stability of his brains to propitiate his agrarian lust: that may be ascribed—with even more than the semblance of truth—to his delight in repainting the face of nature, which in the vicinity of his "mountain farm" was rather haggard before his planting and pruning made it comely. Again, when the Princess Charlotte "took him up," he was strong in her defence; but his tone changed entirely when the Regent, afterwards George IV., honoured himself by honouring the poet. Then he reproved the sins of the Princess, overlooking with a more than suspicious blindness the like faults in her husband; and we may be permitted to remark that though to be the first baronet of King George's creation, was an honour valuable and pleasing as a State recognition, vet as a tribute from a profligate sovereign it was utterly worthless.

But whatever grotesqueness or peculiarity distinguished some of his relationships, to his friends and acquaintances he was invariably faithful and kind and homely—except Archibald Constable perhaps, whom the bitter experiences of the crash must have alienated, and not inexcusably, from his warmer regard. Tom Purdie, a poacher whom he made his shepherd, and who served him with doglike fidelity to the last; Laidlaw, his steward and amanuensis; the hunch-backed tailor, Goodfellow, whose deathbed he visited; and scores of others in the same rank, revered and loved him, and continued stedfast in their devotion in adversity as well as in adulation and success.

Then "he spoke to every man as if they were his blood relations." The king, as king, he regarded with a sort of conservative awe, but we question much if his mechanical and spontaneous goodheartedness enveloped George IV. more completely than it did "Rigdumfunnidos," the cunning tailor, publisher, and auctioneer. On his brute pets again he lavished the fondest affection, and we rather think his liking for John Ballantyne was of the same undiscriminating kind. Scott traced his love of animals to race, and the habits of his earliest years; indeed, during an excursion with Turner, the painter, and Skene, an early friend, to Smailholm Tower, he told the latter that his lying on the turf and heather among the sheep and lambs at Sandyknowe, had inspired him with a tender regard of those animals; and one of his most humane peculiarities was his constant custom of speaking to his dogs and horses as if they were rational beings.

He carried simplicity and bonhommie into all classes of society, and few have seen greater variety, or been more universally welcomed, for his naturalness and liveliness were very loveable, and the theme of general comment. Besides, he had no rivals; and for the reasons we have set forth in speaking of the resolutions he formed, he was beloved by those whom he distanced so far in the race for renown. Jeffrey, Wordsworth, Moore, Campbell, Wilson, Hogg, Irving, Byron, Crabbe, Southey, and hosts of lesser lights, were unanimous in their esteem, and conversations with Scott, or visits to Abbotsford, figure conspicuously in their memoirs. Among the vulgar sort, whether high or low, he was emphatically the fashion; his sayings circulated among them, and by them his modes of life and speech were imitated. No man, in short, was so universally honoured, or had his praises more widely sung. Yet he remained unspoiled by flattery. Pride never became vanity. If he could go down to posterity as the first Scott of Abbotsford—the original aim round which every faculty clustered—he was content; and the honours heaped upon him were then mere drops in the ocean of his satisfaction.

He can hardly be said to have carried a liberal or placable spirit into politics. He was an uncompromising Tory and a bitter partisan. He strenuously opposed the Reform Bill, and retorted to the vulgar cry at a Jedburgh meeting—"Burk Sir Walter"—by saying that "he cared no more for their hissing than for the gabble of geese or the braying of asses." Believing the excitement for the extension of the suffrage to be absurd, he became at one time a leading contributor of political disquisitions to *The Beacon*, a light which is said to have been extinguished by the flare of its own scurrility. But his antagonism to democratic tendencies was doubtless embittered by the atrocities of the French Revolution, which operated powerfully on his imagination in youth.

Into politics, however, he rarely entered. His political hue was traditional and clannish, and more the fruit of fancy than of principle, as all traditional colours are. He was as true to the creed of his chief (Buccleuch) and his clan, as his menials were true to him. He seems to have relished the state he kept at Abbotsford more than all the glories of Westminster; and in courtesy and hospitality few surpassed him, for though his privacy was daily invaded, and his tranquillity broken by obsequious admirers and flocks of insipid tourists, he seldom murmured or said an ungracious word. In his correspondence, his politeness was quite as remarkable. He never demurred to giving advice or encouragement to strangers, except perhaps when a New York damsel sent him "The Cherokee Lovers" to revise and put upon the

British stage, for which piece he paid no less than £5 of postage. A fortnight later he received a duplicate, in case the original should have been lost in the Atlantic, and for it a similar payment had to be made.

It only remains to be said that it was a pitiless fate which decreed failure in his fortune and in his family too. His children died within fifteen years of his own death, and the only direct descendants of the great novelist now alive are Mary Monica Hope-Scott, the daughter of Charlotte Harriet Jane Lockhart (a daughter of his biographer, who had married his daughter Sophia), and J. R. Hope-Scott, and her two children by the Hon. C. M. Scott, whom Miss Scott married in 1874. It was well that Sir Walter was not a seer as well as a minstrel, or he would have had more cause to say, as he did a year or two before his death-"It is written that nothing shall flourish under my shadow; the Ballantynes, Terry, Nelson, Weber, all came to distress. Nature has written on my brow-'Your shade shall be broad, but there shall be no protection derived from it to aught you favour."



THACKERAY.



THACKERAY.

WILLIAM MAKEPEACE THACKERAY* was born on the banks of the Ganges in the year 1811, a year before his friend and fellow-labourer, Charles Dickens. In the diversity of its course, the depth of its volume, and the multitude of its mouths, that great river is not inapt as an illustration of the man whose infancy was nurtured amid the murmur of its waters. He too was many-mouthed, for he died laurelled in the fiction, the humour, the satire, and the morals of his age, excelling most of his contemporaries in each, and all in most.

Without lingering over his genealogy—though in his later days he himself professed partiality for good breeding and a good strain—we may remark, that with the Northern blood of his ancestors he derived the breeziness of his satire and the honesty of his censure. As far as it can be traced his family was of a Saxon stock long settled in Yorkshire. His immediate progenitors sprang from Hampsthwaite, in the West Riding, some

^{*} The books to which reference has chiefly been made are:—
"Thackeray, the Humorist and Man of Letters," by Theodore
Taylor. London: J. C. Hotten. 1869. "Studies on Thackeray,"
by James Hannay. London: George Routledge & Sons. "Thackerayana." London: Chatto & Windus.

miles from the wild district where the mountain spirit of the Brontës was fostered.

Dr Thomas Thackeray, the novelist's most distinguished ancestor, was born in this village, probably of humble parentage. At first he had to weather many struggles and uncertainties; but on the whole his life was one of honour, success, and happy memories; and he had sixteen children. Under tuition at Eton, where he was a foundationer, he made rapid progress in book learning, and was elected to a scholarship in King's College, Cambridge, in 1711, whence, after imbibing sound Whig principles, of which, according to Dr Edmund Pyle, who wrote his memoir, he was proud, he returned to Eton as assistant master; and after failing in his candidature for the headship of King's, through Sir Robert Walpole's preference for a rival, he became master of Harrow, whither by judicious restraint and culture, he allured multitudes to learning, and ruled their studies in a way that made his memory fragrant among many illustrious pupils. His distinction as a teacher won him the chaplainship to the father of George III., and moved the Bishop of Winchester (Dr Hoadly) to offer him the Archdeaconry of Surrey, an honour so unexpected, that, according to Richard's "History of Lynn," the poor master nearly fainted at institution.

This estimable and erudite man, who partly educated Sir William Jones, died in 1760, and had his epitaph written by his pupil Dr Parr. But his wife, Theodosia Woodward, an Eton lady, survived him till January 1797, having attained the age of ninety, and lived to see her own children prosperous and respectable, and her descendants widely-scattered and increasing.

The grandfather of the novelist was the youngest of

the sixteen, and bore the same name. Obtaining an appointment in the East India Company's service, through the interest of two brothers-in-faw-Major Rennell, surveyor-general of Bengal, and James Harris, Esq., of Dacca, both in the service of that Company,—he married a Miss Webb, of the same Webbs as the hero of Wynendael, who thought his Grace of Marlborough the greatest traitor that ever lived. He became a member of the Council, sat at the Board with Warren Hastings. and signed some of its minutes. After making a fortune he came to England. His son, Richmond Thackeray, remained in India, and in course of time filled a number of respectable offices at Calcutta, where his renowned son William Makepeace was born.

Of Thackeray's father we know little, except that he died in 1816, in his thirtieth year, and that his son always speaks of him with respect. The mother, who was only nineteen when her son was born, some years after her husband's death married a Major Carmichael Smyth, and, in surviving her husband more than half a century, upheld the credit of the Thackeray family for longevity. Mr Trollope says she is remembered as a handsome, spare, grey-haired lady, whom Thackeray treated with courtly respect. Of his step-father also, Thackeray invariably speaks with esteem, and he is not to be confounded with the villainous progenitor of Barry Lyndon, as might with some reason be supposed. Of the rest of his relations it is unnecessary to say more than mention that an uncle, Dr George Thackeray, achieved the honour for which his greatgrandfather toiled, becoming Provost of King's in 1814, and remaining in that dignity till his death in 1850; and that a cousin, Lieutenant E. Talbot Thackeray, won the Victoria Cross for extinguishing a fire in the Delhi Magazine, in 1857, under a heavy cannonade from the enemy.

On the way from India to England in 1817, when he was seven years of age, Thackeray's vessel touched at St Helena, and he is there said to have been taken, along with other timid spectators, to see the caged terror of Europe at Bowood; but the name of the great warrior could only have been a mere sound to the boy, as his appearance was a dim memory to the man, for in his description of the Parisian obsequies of Napoleon in 1840, he makes no allusion whatever to that incident, which certainly should have struck his childish fancy. In one of his latest works, however, he says that at an island on his way home, his black servant took him a long walk over rocks and hills until a garden was reached, where they saw a man walking. "That's he," said the black man, "that's Buonaparte. He eats three sheep every day, and all the children he can lay hands on."

Thackeray says he reached England when she was in mourning for the young Princess Charlotte, the hope of the Empire, who died in November 1817. He was placed under the care of his grandfather and godfather, who lived a life of ease and opulence at Hadley, Chipping Barnet, where he had settled on returning from India. Here, it seems, his grandson practically began his education; but the names of his teachers, and of his favourite books, with many other circumstances of his early life, which it would have been interesting to know, have been lost. Whether he was precocious like Pope, or mediocre like Scott, or imperturbably stupid and inapt as Dame Elizabeth Delap described Goldsmith at the age of three, is not recorded, though there are in the more ambitious sketches of him some indications of the impressionscalled up, we should say, from the oblivion of forgotten memories-which his good-humoured diligence, and not overstrained sense of duty, produced.

He spent some time at the estate which his step-father, Major Smyth, rented near Ottery St Mary, in Devonshire. An Exeter paper mentioned shortly after his death that he went to school at Ottery St Mary, but the vicar of that place, the Rev. Dr Cornish, in a letter which he wrote contradicting that statement, says that Thackeray, while visiting his step-father, borrowed books from the vicarage, that the Clavering St Mary and Chatteris in "Pendennis," correspond in minute particulars with Ottery St Mary and Exeter; that one of the vignettes in that novel is a picture of the clock-tower of Ottery Church; and that he borrowed Carey's translation of "The Birds of Aristophanes," which he read with intense delight, and returned with three illustrative drawingsindicating even in those early years that love of humour and artistic capability which contributed so much to his fame. Here, too, he began to write his puerile rhymes, and of these the rev. gentleman above-mentioned gives a sample, an Irish melody set to the tune of "The Minstrel Boy," inserted in an Exeter paper at the time, which he believes to have been the first published composition of the great humorist. But for the charm with which it is thus invested, it possesses no interest whatever. The wit is neither pungent nor sarcastic; nor is the versification good. In short, Thackeray was a boy whose parts caused no surprise, and excited little hope. There were some signs, however, of a bold moral tone, and also of intellectual independence, especially in his love of the "charming, wicked Aristophanes, whom he vowed to be the greatest poet of them all."

This, however, was when he was in the bloom and buoyancy of youth, before his individualities had dawned, or his antipathies blossomed in satire, or his sympathies were sunned in sentiment and song. His real life cannot be said to have begun amid the scent of his grandfather's clover, or while he luxuriated in the indulgence which the old man lavished. A man never breathes the air of emulation under dame-teachers and grandfathers. His struggles then, if struggles at all, are too fleeting to be remembered. It is when he is lured or stung to attainment by ambition or shame that the heart-life quickens, and the brain-life begins to throb.

This life in Thackeray commenced to stir, somewhat languidly it must be confessed, when he entered the Charter-House, "an ancient foundation of the time of James I. (1609), still subsisting in the heart of London," affectionately referred to as Greyfriars in the "Newcomes," "The History of Pendennis," and "The Adventures of Philip." In the first he calls it a place "of old walks, old staircases, old passages and old chambers, with decrepit old porters; walking in the midst of which we walk as it were in the early seventeenth century." But these were the characteristics which gave it the quietness of monasticism, and the mustiness of learning: a comatose sort of place, where boys received a fair grounding in the classics.* On the tenth form of this antique

^{*} In the North American Review, Mr Thomas Hughes gives some interesting facts about this now famous institution:—" In 1609, a substantial yeoman, Thomas Sutton by name, purchased from Lord Suffolk the lately-discovered Charterhouse, by Smithfield, and obtained letters-patent empowering him to found an hospital and school on the old site. In the patent, sixteen persons are named and incorporated as governors, which number, consisting always of persons eminent in Church and State, remained unaltered until increased by four under the advice of the Public Schools Commissioners. The governors meet twice a year to view the state of the hospital, make election of poor men and poor scholars, and do other business. The property of the corporation, apart from the Smithfield site, produced an income of about £23,000, of which

seminary we find he sat in 1822, on the seventh form in 1823, and on the fifth in 1824. By the year 1828, when he was seventeen, he was a first-form lad and a monitor. It was the practice in the Charter-house * for the dux to recite a Latin oration in verse fundatoris nostri. There was also a pleasant and profitable custom in which the young people vied with each other in poetical talent, in order to get a place in the Charter-house Odes. Among these celebrities young Thackeray was not numbered. He seems to have gone through a quiet school career without rivalry or ostentation—doing what lay to him in a dutiful, and, we may presume, not uncreditable manner, but showing no reluctance to exchange the venerable archways of the Charter-house for the cloisters and corridors of Cambridge. He who desires to pursue the course of his study at the Charterhouse should consult the numerous references to that establishment scattered throughout his novels. The compactest notion of his character at that period is to be got from a school-fellow who described him to Mr Trollope thus:-

about £8000 was spent on the school. The boys were of three classes, sixty foundationers, named by the governors in rotation, and entitled to free maintenance and education, clothes, and a gown and trencher cap, with an exhibition of £80 a year at either university, upon passing a satisfactory examination at the age of eighteen; boarders, who live in the masters' houses, and day boys, paying £18, 18s, for their education. The old school in Smithfield is a thing of the past. Since the visit of the Public Schools Commissioners in 1862, the governors, acting in the spirit of their recommendations, have transplanted the school to one of the most beautiful parts of England, in the neighbourhood of Guildford. The great value of the site of the old school has enabled them to proceed in the most liberal manner, and the new school buildings, boarding-houses, and arrangements of all kinds are equal, if not superior, to those of any other school in the kingdom."

^{* &}quot;Newcomes," Popular Edition, p. 732.

"He came to school young—a pretty, gentle, and rather timid boy. I think his experience there was not generally pleasant. Though he had afterwards a scholarlike knowledge of Latin, he did not attain distinction in the school. With the boys who knew him, Thackeray was popular; but he had no skill in games; and I think no taste for them. He was already known by his faculty of making verses, chiefly parodies. I only remember one line of one parody on a poem of L. E. L.'s about 'Violets, dark blue violets;' Thackeray's version was 'Cabbages, bright green cabbages,' and we thought it very witty. He took part in a scheme which came to nothing, for a school magazine, and he wrote verses for it, of which I only remember that they were good of their kind. When I knew him better in later years, I thought I could recognise the sensitive nature which he had as a boy."

Almost all writers cherish the memory of their schools. In many cases the memory has been stung into hate, but generally, from indifference, it has grown into a deepseated bias the other way. This was the case with Thackeray. He was never merciless about the faults of his school, nor extravagant about its virtues. He speaks of it with an adroit tenderness which wants to be touching, without being maudlin.

His aptitude for the pencil was early displayed; and it was while at Smiffle—by which facetious name Greyfriars was known to Carthusians—that he developed his marvellous faculty for sketching. He was destined for the profession of an artist, and subsequently studied on the Continent for that Bohemian and precarious life; and although circumstances led him to change his mind, and to paint in ink, instead of oil, yet at the dispersion of his large and valuable library after his death, the fly-leaves and margins of the books were found to be filled with etchings, comical figures, and dexterous designs drawn with facile hand and humorous art. The most valuable of these etchings have been crowded into an entertaining work, issued to illustrate the genius of Thackeray as a sketcher.* The earlier, which will also be found the most naïve and playful, were suggested by the characters in the text-books at *Smiffle*; and it is recorded that his popularity among his school-fellows was secured from the first by the entertainment which his pencil thus afforded.

At this same institution in the year 1827, he attempted the art of versification. In his schoolboy copy of Thucydides he inscribes his somewhat exceptional experience of the tender passion in these laconic lines:—

"Love 's like a mutton chop,
Soon it grows cold;
All its attractions hop
Ere it grows old.
Love 's like a colic sure:
Both painful to endure;
Brandy 's for both a cure,
So I've been told.

"When for some fair, the swain
Burns with desire,
In Hymen's fatal chain,
Eager to try her,
He weds as soon 's he can,
And jumps—unhappy man—
Out of the frying pan
Into the fire."

As an incident of his aptness at caricature, the writer of the book just mentioned says that Abbé Barthelemy's "Travels of Anacharsis the Younger," suggested the

^{* &}quot;Thackerayana." London: Chatto & Windus.

figure of a wandering minstrel, with battered hat and dislocated flageolet, piping his way through the world. We are not sure but Goldsmith may have had something to do with the conception. But be that as it may, to a mind so bent upon forbidden excursions in the hours of instruction, a vast field was open in the romances which delighted that generation much more than this: "Quixote," "Orlando Furioso," "The Arabian Nights," &c.; and in that wide field of imagination, so congenial to his own genius, the young man seemed to revel. Some light is thrown upon his tastes in these matters in "De Juventate,"* where he says:—

"'I say, old boy, draw Vivaldi torturing the Inquisition,' or 'Draw us Don Quixote and the mills you know,' amateurs would say to boys who had a taste for drawing—'Peregrine Pickle we liked, our fathers admiring it, and telling us (the sly old boys) it was capital fun, but I think I was rather bewildered by it, though Roderick Random was, and remains delightful.'"

Some radiance is also thrown around the insipid details of biography by the brightness of his occasional holiday. Here, for instance, he describes the glorious purple which bathed the hills surrounding his holiday loneliness?:—

"As I look up from my desk I see Tunbridge Wells Common and the rocks, the strange familiar place which I remember forty years ago. . . . I stroll over the common and survey the beautiful purple hills around, twinkling with a thousand bright villas, which have sprung up over this charming ground since first I saw it. What an admirable scene of peace and plenty! What a delicious air breathes over the heath, blows the cloud-shadows across it, and murmurs through the full-clad trees!

^{* &}quot;Roundabout Papers." † Tunbridge Toys, Ibid.

Can the world show a land fairer, richer, more cheerful? But fair scene, green woods, bright terraces, gleaming in sunshine, and purple clouds swollen with summer rain—nay the very pages over which my head bends—disappear from before my eyes. They are looking backwards into forty years off, into a dark room, into a little house hard by on the Common, there in the Bartlemytide holidays. The parents have gone to town for two days; the house is all his own—his own and a grim old maid servant's, and a little boy is seated at night in the little drawing-room, pouring over "Manfroni, or the One-handed Monk," so frightened that he scarcely dares to turn round."

Thackeray's early history must yet form the narrative of some industrious biographer. The particulars at hand at present are unusually scarce. There are no mistakes, miscarriages, successes or triumphs with which this brief record of his young life can be varied or graced. In his boyhood he was neither dull nor wicked; an immense favourite with his comrades, he sweetened their tasks with his caricatures, and carried his warm heart in his mouth, which was seldom without the beam of a boy's rich smile. His only tendency to licence was when he escaped "the slaughter-house school" to go to the play, which he dearly loved to the end of his days. Like Dickens, he flung himself with rapture into a splendid performance from the very first; he loved the actors and adored their art; and by-and-by he became a distinguished member of the Garrick Club. For his amusements, he says,* besides the games in vogue, which were played much the same as now, he had novels. Indeed in all sorts of tales he seems to have taken a great delight, and it is certain that they exercised a vast formative influence

^{* &}quot;De Juventate," No. VIII.

on his taste. In later years he deplored that their glory should ever decay, or that dust should gather round them on the shelves. He wept over the "Scottish Chiefs," and gloated over the "Mysteries of Udolpho;" in short, great part of the leisure of his youth seems to have been invested in promiscuous novel reading and in felicitously sketching the features and figures of every historian and hero of all his favourite works, besides their multifarious adventures, from Rollin to the Battle of Cannes-which. by the way, he represents as a boor-fight with beer-jugs. Just as the legends, and stories of robbers, rakes, and rapparees by which their brains were stirred, quickened the mental powers of Scott and Goldsmith, so must Thackeray's avidity in the same direction be set down as the great factor in his development. At all events, the impression these tales had on his mind, and his nerves too, was by no means evanescent, for in writing in 1855 to Mr G. H. Lewes, the biographer of Goethe, he says: "Goethe's eyes were extraordinarily dark, piercing, and brilliant; I felt quite afraid before them, and recollect comparing them to the eyes of the hero of a certain romance called 'Melmoth, the Wanderer,' which used to alarm me thirty years ago."

In 1828 he was turned over to the teaching of Cambridge, where he kept seven terms. About his habits here, when life was beginning to expand and passion to flow, we have not much light. He had little passion, though much tenderness. That he was innocent of uproarious joyousness, and the "sackbut and cymbal" of the student, no one can doubt. Tickell, whom Addison made his Under-Secretary of State in return for some rhythmic adulation, says that the great essayist must be distinguished from his fellows by the irregularity of his pulse. Thackeray must be distinguished by the regularity

of his. His young life was conspicuously immaculate; indeed his whole career exhibits the most constant composure, excepting when—the circulation of the *Cornhill Magazine* having reached 110,000 copies,—he rushed off to Paris, and could hardly be restrained from spending his princely income as editor in the jewellers' shops.

At college he was no grinder. But his greed of literature continued, and he prosecuted caricature throughout his academical career, which may be called one of gentlemanly mediocrity. What he says of Pendennis may safely be identified with what he did himself:- "During the first term of Mr Pen's academical life he attended classical and mathematical lectures with tolerable assiduity, but discovering before a very long time that he had little taste or genius for pursuing the exact sciences, and being perhaps rather annoyed that one or two very vulgar young men, who did not even use straps to their trousers, so as to cover the thick coarse shoes and stockings which they wore, beat him completely in the lecture-room, he gave up his attendance at that class, and announced to his fond parent that he proposed to devote himself exclusively to the cultivation of Greek and Roman literature. Presently he began to find that he learned little good at the classic lectures. His fellowstudents were too dull, as in mathematics they were too learned for him. Mr Buck, the tutor, was no better a scholar than many a fifth-form boy in Greyfriars; he might have some stupid and hum-drum notion about the order and grammatical construction of a passage of Æschylus or Aristophanes, but had no more notion of the poetry than Mrs Binge, his bedmaker, and often grew weary of the dull students and tutor blundering over a few lines of a play which he could read in a tenth part of the time which they gave to it. After all, private reading, as he began to perceive, was the only study which was really profitable to a man; and he announced to his mamma that he should read by himself a great deal more, and in public a great deal less."

And he did read much; he read in secret those-

"Whose works, the beautiful and base, contain Of vice and virtue more instructive rules Than all the sober sages of the schools."

But he found afterwards that he had not read enough: in 1849 he said he wished he had had five years' reading before he took to his "trade." He devoted himself with great ardour, however, to Horace, "the dear old heathen," for whom he always entertained the reverence and love of an ardent pupil. The apt illustration and prompt witticism scattered throughout his writings are, to a great extent, the result of his intimacy with the Venusian. He read, but with less alacrity, the great satirist Juvenal, whom he afterwards described as a "truculent brute;" and also evinced a preference for the class of writers of whom Montaigne, Pope, Beranger, Addison, &c., are types. Mr Hannay says* that the writings of Scott, whose genius then towered over Europe, also deeply influenced him. With stores from these and other writers his mind was admirably stocked; and he left Cambridge an accomplished Latin, Greek, and English The Greek he afterwards let slip, but of his scholar. other attainments he kept a firm and usurious hold, and it is to them and his "strain" of good blood and breeding that he owes the unique distinction of being the first classical writer and writer for gentlemen that this century has produced.

His stay in Cambridge was singularly uneventful.

^{* &}quot;Studies of Thackeray."

Though he was not illustrious in academical achievement, he was remarkable, at all events, in not having performed any academical freak which could make him either a marvel or a memory among his class-men. The only thing which could come within the category of escapades was an Easter trip to Paris, undertaken without the knowledge of his guardians or teachers, the experiences of which he afterwards described in the "Roundabout Papers."

At Cambridge he met Mr Mitchell Kemble, the Anglo-Saxon scholar, and Tennyson, then beginning to breathe out melodious numbers in "The Lover's Tale"—published only this year—in which he sings of Camilla and Julian, with ecstatic flights such as this:

"Hither we came,
And sitting down upon the golden moss,
Held converse sweet and low—low converse sweet,
In which our voices bore least part. The wind
Told a love tale beside us, how he woo'd
The waters, and the waters answering lisp'd
To kisses of the wind; that, sick with love,
Fainted at intervals, and grew again
To utterance of passion!"

With the highly-strung nature of this poet, he was not in perfect accord, viewing the vista of his scintillant vagaries as "a pleasing land of drowsy head, of dreams that wave before the half-shut eye." Nevertheless, a friendship was commenced with him which was only terminated by the novelist's death. His most intimate friend seems to have been a Mr Lettsom, who two years later introduced him to some of the most genteel families in Weimar, and who after a somewhat chequered life, acted as *charge d'affaires* to her Majesty's Embassy in Uruguay about the time of his distinguished friend's decease. In

company with this gentleman Thackeray started a series of comic papers at Cambridge under the title of "The Snob, a Literary and Scientific Journal," the first number of which appeared on the 9th of April. Eleven numbers of "The Snob," each of the most meagre dimensions, were issued, the dedication, in all probability by Thackeray, being—

"To all Proctors, past, present, and future— Whose taste it is our privilege to follow, Whose virtue it is our duty to imitate, Whose presence it is our interest to avoid."

The papers, almost all by Thackeray, were full of impetuous fun, and were the first indications of the spirit which painted the "Yellowplush Papers" — the unrestrained nature of whose freedom, though they were the first to raise him into notice, he regretted in 1849, when he said: "I suppose we all begin by being too savage. I know *one* who did."

With vivid, though somewhat extravagant vignettes of a mathematical lesson, a class-man, a grinder, and a plodder, Thackeray finished his academical etchings. He went forth to the world with a light heart, a sound head, and £20,000 in his pocket. At first his friends had destined him for the bar, but at school and college he had shown them an obvious and oppugnant predeliction for Art. To art he resolved to devote himself, and in the hope of succeeding in that uncertain and laborious profession he left Cambridge without a degree. He was one of a dozen English lads who repaired to Weimar, the capital of Saxony, "for study, sport, or society." They had little of the first, much of the second, and the best society that was to be had. Through the kindly offices of Mr Lettsom, who was attached to the suite of the

English Ambassador, he was introduced to all the fashionable families of that intellectual centre, where his life was a round of harmless entertainment, and instructive amusement. Goethe, the great sun of German intellect, though past his blaze, still shone with the warm and glowing glory of his level gleams. Thackeray was one of those who looked upon him in the radiance of his setting. He saw him thrice, once on a morning, which the Geheimrath had set apart for his visit, when the dark piercing eyes frightened him; again walking in his garden, and the third time, stepping into his chariot; and the interview between these two great men is gracefully set forth in Thackeray's letter in Mr Lewes's "Life of Goethe," in which he pays a tribute to the homeliness and culture of the Saxon court which had courteously received him within its polished and congenial circle, with its gorgeous uniforms, its brilliant costumes, its ceremonies, balls, and dinners; and praises the beauty and frankness and accomplishments of its women. In this little city also he pursued his pastime of sketching, chiefly for the sake of children whom his kind heart fondled, and also for the albums of his friends—which albums with his quaint work are still shown there with pride. These gay occupations were diversified by the interest he found in Fraser's Magazine, to which he soon became a contributor, the Literary Gazette, the Comic Annual (by Tom Hood, whom he loved afar off as a kindred soul) "The Keepsake," and "Bombastes Furioso." And if he spent some time at the easel, it is believed he was more constantly at the desk preparing himself for those brilliant compositions with which he was soon to astonish his contemporaries. Weimar was a green spot in his memory to the end of his life; he loved to look back upon the early, happy days he spent there, and enjoyed nothing so

much in his after-years as a return visit to it in company with his daughters.

As yet, however, he adhered to his determination to be an artist, and, following the bent of his mind, studied at Rome and Paris. "In the latter city," says a writer in the Edinburgh Review for January 1848, "we well remember ten or twelve years ago finding him day after day engaged in copying the pictures in the Louvre, in order to qualify himself for his intended profession." Here, as usual, he was the favourite of his fellow-workers: and when, in 1848, M. Arvey, a landscape painter, in whose atelier Thackeray spent many hours of "happiness and sunshine," was driven by the Revolution to England, he found a ready asylum in the house of his Paris comrade. In his artist days he lived in the Latin quarter, a striking contrast to the Hotel Bristol, where he afterwards dispensed hospitality. He always had a strong partiality for the beauty, the brilliance, and especially for the cookery, of the French capital (for though not a gourmand he was a gourmet), but he has a meagre acquaintance of his genius or writings who would suppose the showman of "Vanity Fair" to have been at all influenced by its frivolity.

But he not only painted diligently: he heedfully and sedulously improved his literature. What first involved him in the literary maze, it is difficult to say, except that he had all along had a sneaking love of it. Art and letters both had luring voices for him, and although each wooed him, he knew not to which syren to succumb. Certainly he did not enter the field as a brainless or harebrained speculator, for he was as conscious of the something within him, as Arthur Hallam was of the musical soul of Tennyson when he saw his first long poem; and he had an intuitively shrewd perception that

in the satirical line, a wise head and fearless hand were wanted, at whose beckon the sores and putrefactions around him might shrink and shrivel up somewhat. It has been said that it was his success in the literary art, rather than his failure in painting, which gradually drew him into the career of authorship. This we think little else than assumption, for no ground we have heard of can be put forward for supposing he did not follow his true bent. Art was that bent—not the art that works with oils, but the art "which paints in colours that never crack."

In Paris, at all events, he wrote the most of his early magazine sketches; his letters to English and American newspapers, and, in the same city, twenty years later, he for the most part edited the Cornhill Magazine, Having made some literary connections, he left France for London in 1834, and in that year, while residing in Albion Street, Hyde Park, at the house of his step-father, became a regular contributor to Fraser's Magazine, then in the zenith of its fame. At the age of twenty-two the young man edited The National Standard and Journal of Literature, Science, Music, Theatricals, and the Fine Arts, a sheet of pasquinade and fearless criticism blotted out by its own virulence. In this periodical first appeared the "Devil's Wager"-subsequently reprinted in the "Paris Sketch-Book "-illustrated by a cut of the devil drawing a fat man through the air with his tail. His contributions to Fraser-chiefly letters on art and exhibitions-at that time excited only a cold interest, but his employment on the magazine did him great service, and he was only twenty-three when he was recognised as one of a staff managed by Maginn, a man of deep learning and loose morals, whom he afterwards pourtrayed as the "editor and Greek scholar," and to whom he gave £,500 when a prisoner in the Fleet. Through this connection Thackeray also crossed the bright galaxy of literary lights then on high, though he himself cannot be said to have done more than shine with borrowed glory. Lamb or Coleridge he never knew, but he met Southey and Sydney Smith, and became intimate with Carlyle and Dickens, the latter of whom he subsequently described as "the young man who came and took his place calmly at the head of the whole tribe of humorists, and kept it." Among others of his acquaintance were Barry Cornwall, James Hogg, John Galt, Lockhart, Theodore Hook, Brewster, Edward Irving, and Father Prout.

The first article which established his reputation was a humorous critique on "My Book; or the Anatomy of Conduct," by a poor fool who had given up woollen drapery to instruct the human race in the art of etiquette -contributed, by the way, shortly after Thackeray had walked up to Dickens' chambers in Furnival's Inn with two or three drawings in his hand and offered to the author of "Pickwick" to illustrate his writings, an offer which Dickens happily refused, although Thackeray did furnish a series of etchings to illustrate Douglas Jerrold's "Men of Character." This blight on his "artistical existence" stimulated the young aspirant to fresh exertion at his desk, and he was thereafter known in literature by the pseudonyms-"Michael Angelo Titmarsh," "Fitzboodle," "Charles Yellowplush," and "Ikey Solomons." The "Yellowplush Papers," which immediately followed his dissection of "Anatomy," were his most considerable hit at the time. His hands were soon full, however, in writing for Cruikshank's Almanack, The Times, Punch, and the Westminster.

Up to this time, as already mentioned, he had chiefly resided in Paris, where, Macready says, in his *Diary*, he

had spent all his fortune; but Macready was mistaken in that, for although some of his £, 20,000 went in cards, a good deal of it was sunk in an Indian bank, and still more in the adventure about to be mentioned. In March 1836 a company was formed for the purpose of starting a daily newspaper—The Constitutional and Public Ledger. Major Smyth was principal proprietor and chairman of the company. Of this journal Thackeray, who was also a large shareholder, was appointed Paris correspondent. Among the writers to the paper were Grote the historian, Joseph Hume, and others of the advanced Whigs, but, like all newspapers conducted by untrained journalists, it came to its end in a few months, and with it the remains of Thackeray's fortune. Of the good things with which he started life, it is said he often playfully remarked that he lost his patrimony first; and he thus describes his gullibility in the matter of newspaper enterprise in "Lovel the Widower:"

"They are welcome to make merry at my charges in respect of a certain bargain which I made on coming to London, and in which, had I been Moses Primrose purchasing green spectacles, I could scarcely have been more taken in. Mr Jenkinson was an old college acquaintance whom I was idiot enough to imagine a respectable man. The fellow had a very smooth tongue and sleek sanctified exterior. He was rather a popular preacher, and used to cry a good deal in the pulpit. He and a queer wine merchant and bill discounter, Sherrick by name, had somehow got possession of that neat little literary paper, The Museum, which, perhaps, you may remember, and this eligible literary property my friend Honeyman, with his wheedling tongue, induced me to purchase. I dare say I gave myself airs as editor of that confounded Museum, and proposed to educate public taste, to diffuse morality and sound literature throughout the nation, and to pocket a liberal salary in return for my services. I dare say I printed my own sonnets, my own tragedy, my own verses; I dare say I wrote satirical articles. Pray, my good friend, hast thou never done likewise? If thou hast never been a fool, be sure thou wilt never be a wise man!"

He was connected with only two other serial abortions -The Torch, which was started on 26th August 1837, and lived for six months, and The Parthenon, which succeeded The Torch, and had an existence as brief and inglorious. In 1836, after he had tried to be present at the execution of Fieschi and Lacenaire, he varied the character of his productions by "Flore et Zephyr, Ballet Mythologique, dédié à (Flore), par Theophile Wagstaff." This was a folio with six lithographs, brought out by Sherley of Bond Street on November 25th. It seems not to have been without merit, however. Mr Lancaster was very strong in his admiration of them, and devoted two of his large pages to presenting them in pen and ink: "In the first plate," he says, "'La Danse fait ses affrandes sur l'autel de l'harmonie,' in the shape of Flore and Zephyr coming trippingly to the footlights, and paying no manner of regard to the altar of harmony, represented by a fiddle with an old and dreary face, and a laurel wreath on its head, and very great regard to the unseen but perfectly understood 'house.' Next is 'Triste et abattre, les séductions des Nymphes le (Zephyr) tentant en vain;' Zephyr looking theatrically sad, the man in the orchestra endeavouring to combine business with pleasure, so as to play the flageolet and read his score, and at the same time miss nothing of the deploring, is intensely comic." But the effort failed, and with it Thackeray's dreams of independent authorship perished for a time.

In the decade of which we are now speaking—1830 to 1840—Thackeray was perhaps more trenchant in criticism than at any other period. In later years he became more prudent and less biting. Driven to criticism by the failure of some of his minor tales, no one could say that he did not dispense judgment with an unflinching hand and unerring eye. He had attained the measure of his manhood and the bloom of his faculties, and those he enlisted in the cause of truth and honour. If there was anything he abhorred it was clap-trap, pretension, and falseness. In his more youthful critiques he had directed the whole power of his intellect to the exposure of shoddy, sham, and show. As early as 1832, when he was but twenty-one years of age, in a tale in Fraser -- "Elizabeth Brownrigge"-he gave, in some weighty words of which these are a few, the author of "Eugene Aram" a hint of the false sympathies which in some people his great work was calculated to create:-

"From the frequent perusal of older works of imagination, I had learned so to weave the incidents of my story as to interest the feelings of the reader in favour of virtue, and to increase his detestation of vice. I have been taught by 'Eugene Aram' to mix vice and virtue up together in such an inextricable confusion as to render it impossible that any preference should be given to either, or that the one, indeed, should be at all distinguishable from the other."

Mr Trollope has said (in the *Cornhill*), "That which the world will most want to know of Thackeray is the effect which his writings have produced." The effect must surely be to make honest men hate all manner of cant, and to scorn the oddities and eccentricities of what has been called the "*lusus naturae*" school of novelists, from the sensations of Blessington to the startling situations of Ainsworth—Jack Sheppard, for instance—and the improbabilities of Disraeli. To these he addressed himself might and main, but also with a calm dignity and perfect repose of humour, not only in "Elizabeth Brownrigge," but in "Catherine" (1839), "George Barnwell," and "Codlingsby." It was in the last mentioned that he successfully burlesqued "the jewelly hemorrhage of words" of the now noble author of "Coningsby." Here, for example, is his description of Codlingsby's palace in Holywell Street:—

"The carpet was of white velvet—(laid over several webs of Aubusson, Ispahan, and Axminster, so that your foot gave no more sound as it trod upon the yielding plain than the shadow did which followed you)—of white velvet, painted with flowers, arabesques, and classic figures, by Sir William Ross, J. M. W. Turner, R.A., Mrs Mee, and Paul Delaroche. The edges were wrought with seed-pearls, fringed with Valenciennes lace and bullion. The walls were hung with cloth of silver, embroidered with gold figures, over which were worked pomegranates, polyanthuses, and passion-flowers, in ruby, amethyst, and smaragd. The drops of dew which the artificer had sprinkled on the flowers were of diamonds."

But our reference to his minor works must be hasty and desultory. Prodigal in number, they embraced a wide range of subject, from "The Art of Eating, and Memorials of Gormandising"—the former a help to the hungry Briton abroad—to "Tales and Epistles of the Literati." If caustic and cutting in his criticism, he never uttered what he did not believe; and he modelled his style on this classic dogma of Mr Yellowplush:—"Take my advice, hon'rabble sir—listen to a

humble footmin: its gen'rally best in poatry to understand puffickly what you mean yourself, and to ingspress your meaning clearly afterwards—in the simpler words the better, p'raps."

Then, about 1840-41 he stayed in Paris for a year, and in the course of that time witnessed the funeral of Napoleon, which he described in a letter afterwards published. In 1841, after the manuscript had been refused by Blackwood, he commenced in Fraser the "History of Samuel Titmarsh, and The Great Hoggarty Diamond." It did not fall absolutely flat, but the critics received it coldly. John Sterling, however, read it with extreme delight, and in the year of its appearance pronounced the writer a genius. "What is there better," he said, "in Fielding or Goldsmith? The man is a genius, and with quiet and comfort might produce masterpieces that would last as long as any we have, and delight millions of unborn readers."

Acting as assistant editor of the *Examiner*, he contributed numerous papers to it; continued his connection with *Fraser*; in short, wrote numberless pieces of criticism and satire. "Fitzboodle's Confessions" appeared in 1843, and "Barry Lyndon" in the following year. He had previously begun to write to *Punch* as the "Fat Contributor," and he did good work for the great Comic up till 1850.

At the same time that he was writing promiscuous and scrapy articles, he was quietly and sedulously working at "Vanity Fair," which was by and by to electrify the enlightenment of the empire, and shed that effulgence about his name which has brightened ever since. It was in February 1847, when he had removed to Young Street, Kensington—a beloved locality—and occupied chambers in No. 10 Crown Office Row, Temple, beside

Tom Taylor, the dramatist and biographer, now editor of *Punch*, whom Mortimer Collins called—

"A good fellow; void of vanity; Pictures and china are his chief insanity; But he is full of humour and humanity,"

—it was then, we say, that he commenced the issue in shilling parts of that great work—which by the way, had been rejected by the New Monthly, to which he had previously contributed. The statement of a well-known special correspondent, that it was "bandied about, rejected, from publisher to publisher, and was at length accepted," is of course absurd. It was only rejected by two at the most. The book was a great and a splendid success—not quick but certain—the advance being not so much in absolute power or splendour of speech, as in breadth and subtlety of conception and fertility of It did not strike so as to make the world ring. That was because he never wrote mere turgid sentimentality, but appealed to the mental and intellectual sympathies of educated gentlemen, of whom, if we are to judge by the number of his early admirers, there was no redundancy. As criticism is not within our domain, we may only say that "Vanity Fair"—the history of a selfish, sensual, scheming creature, who devotes her totality of faculty and aspiration to the world, never illumining her being with one spark of self-sacrifice, devotion, or meekness—is the most brilliant of his works, though there is less ease about the satire, less maturity and beauty about the style, than in "Esmond" and "The Newcomes," which soon followed. Its success was greatly promoted by an article in the Edinburgh Review in January 1848, which said :-

"In forming our general estimate of this writer we

wish to be understood as referring principally, if not exclusively to 'Vanity Fair' (a novel in monthly parts), which, though still unfinished, is immeasurably superior, in our opinion, to every other known production of his pen. The great charm of this work is its entire freedom from mannerism and affectation, both in style and sentiment,—the confiding frankness with which the reader is addressed, the thoroughbred carelessness with which the author permits the thoughts and feelings suggested by the situation, to flow in their natural channel, as if conscious that nothing mean or unworthy, nothing requiring to be shaded, gilded, or dressed up in company attire, could fall from him. In a word, the book is the work of a gentleman, which is one great merit, and not the work of a fine, or would-be gentleman, which is another. Then again, he never exhausts, elaborates, or insists too much upon anything; but drops his finest remarks and happiest illustrations as Buckingham dropt his pearls, and leaves them to be picked up and appreciated as chance may bring a discriminating observer to the spot."

"Vanity Fair" was the first of the four great works which made the "quadrilateral of his fame." "Pendennis," which may be said to contain only two popular characters, Pendennis and George Warrington, came out in 1849; and was followed in 1852 by "Esmond"—the most artistic and beautiful of all his works, as it is also an extremely valuable exponent of the manners of the Queen Anne period, for which Thackeray had a strong and early partiality, and for which his wide historical reading gave him special aptitude. In 1855 "Esmond" was followed by "The Newcomes," popularly regarded as his most perfect work, on account of its exquisite and touching pictures, its tender characters and enchaining interest. It is impossible in so restricted a summary of the author's

life, even to outline all his leading works; but of the plot of "Esmond," we adopt this neat paragraph by a writer of very fair judgment, Mr A. Trollope, in a recent number of a leading periodical:—

"The one character to which we will specially call attention is that of Beatrix, the younger heroine of the story. Nothing sadder than the story of Beatrix can be imagined—nothing sadder, though it falls so infinitely short of tragedy. But we speak specially of it here, because we believe its effect on the minds of girls who read it to be thoroughly salutary. Beatrix is a girl endowed with great gifts. She has birth, rank, fortune, intellect and beauty. She is blessed with that special combination of feminine loveliness and feminine wit which men delight to encounter. She becomes as she goes on the object of Esmond's love-and, could she permit her heart to act in this matter, she too would love him. She knows well that he is a man worthy to be loved. She is encouraged to love him by outward circumstances. Indeed, she does love him. But she has decided within her own bosom that the world is her oyster, which has to be opened by her, being a woman, not by her sword, but by her beauty. Higher rank than her own, greater fortune, a bigger place in the world's eyes, grander jewels, have to be won. Harry Esmond, oh, how good he is; how fit to be the lord of any girlif only he were a Duke, or such like! This is her feeling, and this is her resolve. Then she sets her cap at a Duke, a real Duke, and almost gets him-would have got him, only her Duke is killed in a duel before she has been made a Duchess. After that terrible blow she sinks lower still in her low ambition. A scion of banished royalty comes dangling after her, and she, thinking that the scion may be restored to his royal grandeur, would

fain become the mistress of a King. It is a foul career, the reader will say, and there may be some who would ask whether such is the picture which should be presented to the eyes of a young girl by those who are anxious not only for the amusement of her leisure hours, but also for her purity and worth. It might be asked, also, whether the Commandments should be read in her ears, lest she should be taught to steal and to murder. Beautiful as Beatrix is, attractive, clever, charming-prone as the reader is to sympathise with Esmond in his love for this winning creature—vet, by degrees the vileness becomes so vile, the ulcered sores are so revolting, the whited sepulchre is seen to be so foul within, that the girl who reads the book is driven to say, 'Not like that; not like that! Whatever fate may have in store for me, let it not be like that."

The late Henry Lancaster, an advocate in Edinburgh, who wrote one of the best critiques on Thackeray we have seen, said "The Newcomes" was written according to the dogma that fiction has no business to exist unless it be more beautiful than reality. This we hardly believe. There are many capable, if they chose, and if they have suffering enough, of attaining the same purity of nature and the same devotion to truth and virtue which make us love Esmond and Colonel Newcome just as we love John Bunyan and others in as humble a sphere whose "lives are pure and thoughts immaculate," and who look on duty and not happiness as the end and aim of existence. And it would be a somewhat iniquitous, besides an illusive and discouraging thing, to carve models of ravishing purity and paint scenes madly beautiful because of their saintliness. if there were no hope of bringing them into the fray of life from the empyrean of the ideal. Man can copy

truth and virtue and self-reliance just as well as put upon canvass the monitions and melancholy of a storm-cloud, or the twigs and sprays of a mountain birch. If they tried hard there would be little fear of success. No; the special text from which Thackeray preached was not past or future or ideal, but present and living goodness and beauty. He was no ranter. "Away with this canting about great motives!" he said. "Let us not be too proud and fancy ourselves martyrs of the truth,—martyrs or apostles. We are but tradesmen working for bread, and not for righteousness' sake. Let's try and work honestly; but don't let us be prating pompously about our 'sacred calling.'" He levelled the keenest satire, and most biting irony equally against ostentation of soul, speciosity of life and falseness of heart. "Dearly beloved," he says, "neither in nor out of this pulpit do I profess to be bigger, or cleverer, or better, or wiser, than any of you." But he showed them how to be both better and wiser, by creating a flock of paragons and a hideous cavalcade of vice. In this connection, his writings, taken as a whole, may be said to be paradoxical. There is similitude in all, and in all contrariety and diversity. Clive and Pen, Bayham, Warrington and J. J., Colonel Newcome and Major Pendennis, are all metal of the same ring. The chief characteristics of their enemies are cunning and deceit. As a rule, the women are weak: they are exceptionally white or black, the black being swayed in their social depredations more by the devilry of a perverse mind, than by the impulses of passion. "In his female creations," says Brontë, "he was quite unjust;" and Mrs Jamieson, an inferior authority, declared that his holding up Lady Castlewood and Esmond as examples of excellence, and objects for our own best sympathies, proves a low standard in ethics and art. On

the other hand, no character we have yet come across equals Ethel Newcome in sweetness, purity, and grace.

The love of purity which made him scathe the corrupt with every shaft of his feathered speech, coloured the style itself, which, as we have hinted, is essentially pure and beautiful. It even moulded the caligraphy, always neat and plain, which shadowed it forth. There is no gascon element in his language, which flows with the fulness, the ease, and the quietude of a deep, transparent stream; nor is there alembicated passion in his platitudes, or platonism in his loves. The style exhibits no traces of elaborate study-no evidence of his lingering over each sentence with fastidious delicacy; but it is in this freedom from the ponderous that the excellence of the artist and the spontaneity of his art appear: simplicity and naturalness manifest themselves in his most classic periods, and run through the three departments in which he showed himself master.

But although he should be regarded chiefly as a novelist, humorist, and critic, yet the moralist, quite as much as any of these, is disclosed in his writings. Mere novel writing, though good, is only admirable, and criticism didactic. The pure critic may well be regarded in the light of a privileged pedagogue for advanced scholars; the humorist, while his business is to make people laugh, may do more for morality than either. If Thackeray shone in anything besides the purity of his diction it was in the beauty of the morals he taught in that way, and in the strength of his satire, which, handled with consummate skill, he made the handmaiden of morality. His sharpest darts and bitterest scorn always sided with virtue, and it was a unique distinction he claimed for himself when he made his pen say:

"Stranger, I never wrote a flattery, Nor signed a page that registered a lie."

130 William Makepeace Thackeray.

Of the simplicity of nature he was fonder than of its grandeur. Grandeur and sublimity appealed to the rapturous, and Thackeray never allowed himself to go into raptures. Any ecstacy he felt he "thought shame" to show. Yet let it not be assumed that he was a man of blind sensibility, or that he could regard any of the forms of archetypal loveliness with dulness, coldness, or stolidity. It was with a quiet love that he loved the greenery and exuberance of nature; and though his eye would flash and his cheek flush at some of her grander exploits, he adored her without any affluence of exclamation. And it is not overstraining his spirituality to say that he had a very faithful consciousness of the bond that links the outward forms and performances of things to inner analogies and meanings:

"What if earth

Be but the shadow of heaven, and things therein Each to the other like, more than on earth is thought?"

That seems to be his constant query amid the picturesqueness and retirement of the world; and ever when he went out to communicate with the unseen voices, he loved loneliness, like the true worshipper, and considered company an impertinence; even if his children were with him he preferred to be allowed to retire alone within the embosoming presence. Yet, however much his emotions might be affected, he had always a singular facility for keeping the practical and the comic in view, even while his eye might be ready to shed tears; as well as a Turnerian faculty for infusing activity into his stillest pictures by a blending of the implements and emblems of industry. As this piece will shew:—

"The next morning we had passed by the rocks and towns, the old familiar landscapes, the gleaming towers,

by the river side, and the green vineyards combed along the hills; and when I woke up, it was at a great hotel at Cologne, and it was not sunrise yet. Deutz lay opposite, and over Deutz the dusky sky was reddened. The hills were veiled in the mist, and the grey. The grey river flowed underneath us; the steamers were roosting along the quays, a light keeping watch in the cabins here and there, and its reflection quivering in the water. As I look, the skyline towards the east grows redder and redder. A long troop of grey horsemen winds down the river road, and passes over the bridge of boats. You might take them for ghosts, those grey horsemen, so shadowy do they look, but you hear the trample of their hoofs as they pass over the planks. Every minute the dawn twinkles up into the twilight, and over Deutz the heaven blushes brighter. The quays begin to fill with men, the carts begin to creak and rattle, and wake the sleeping echos. Ding, ding, ding, the steamer's bells begin to ring, the people on board to stir and wake. . . . And lo! in a flash of crimson splendour, with blazing scarlet clouds running before his chariot and heralding his majestic approach, God's sun rises upon the world, and all nature wakens and brightens. Oh! glorious spectacle of light and life! Oh! beatific symbol of power, love, joy, beauty, let us look at thee with humble wonder, and thankfully acknowledge and adore."

Then what can be more beautiful or gentle than this scene from "Esmond":—"Esmond came to this spot in one sunny evening of spring, and saw, amidst a thousand black crosses casting their shadows across the grassy mounds, that particular one which marked his mother's resting-place. Many more of those poor creatures that lay there had adopted that same name with which sorrow had rebaptised her, and which fondly seemed to hint their individual story of love and grief. He fancied her in tears

and darkness, kneeling at the foot of her cross under which her cares were buried: surely he knelt down and said his own prayer there, not in sorrow, so much as in awe, (for even his memory had no recollection of her,) and in pity for the pangs which the gentle soul in life had been made to suffer. To this cross she brought them; for this heavenly bridegroom she exchanged the husband who had wooed her, the traitor who had left her. A thousand such hillocks lay round about, the gentle daisies springing out of the grass over them, and each bearing its cross and requiescat. A nun, veiled in black, was kneeling hard by at a sleeping sister's bedside, so fresh made that the spring had scarce had time to spin a coverlid for it; beyond the cemetery walls you had glimpses of life and the world, and the spires and gables of the city. A bird came down from a roof opposite, and lit first on a cross, and then on the grass below it, whence it flew away presently with a leaf in its mouth; then came a sound as of chanting from the chapel of the sisters hard by: others had long since filled the place which poor Mary Magdalene once had there, were kneeling at the same stall and hearing the same hymns and prayers in which her stricken heart had found consolation. I took a little flower off the hillock and kissed it, and went my way, like the bird that had just lighted on the cross by me, back into the world again. Silent receptacle of death, tranquil depth of calm, out of reach of tempest and trouble! I felt as one who had been walking below the sea, and treading amidst the bones of shipwrecks." This is the praise of a true lover, the picture of a true artist: and it can easily be understood in this connection how his early predeliction for, and dabblings in, art cannot but have pointed and expanded his perceptions. Yet it was of the paper in which this picture was drawn-"The

Kickleburys on the Rhine," published in December 1850—that the *Times*, the only newspaper, strange enough, that denied him a leading article at death, said, "It and its class suggest by their feeble flavour the rinsings of a void brain after the more important concoctions of the expired year."

This fact brings us to notice a somewhat incongruous peculiarity of Thackeray's-his sensitiveness to hostile criticism, especially if the shafts were charged with venom. or even the suspicion of it. The Times article just mentioned called forth a stinging satire entitled "An Essay on Thunder and Small Beer," published in the second edition of the little book which formed the subject of the "thunderer's" critique. He had several such altercations, for he was quick at resenting affronts of that sort, particularly from jealous or pretentious contemporaries, and his recriminations were the only blots, if blots they were, on his uniform amiability. But they may, we think, be attributed to an extreme sensibility, developed by a consciousness of honest if sometimes procrastinating labour and stern integrity of purpose, and regret that decoctions of maudlin sentimentality and draughts of highly-seasoned adventure should excite interest in thousands, while his own pure efforts secured a following which could only be counted in tens. Mr Anthony Trollope, who knew Thackeray, and must therefore be regarded as an authority, has this passage in his recently published work*—" To him must have come an inexpressible pang when he was told his story must be curtailed. . . . No little wound of the kind ever came to him but he disclosed it at once. 'They have only bought so many of my new book.' 'Have you seen the abuse of

 $[\]ast$ "English Men of Letters," Thackeray. London : Macmillan & Co.

my last number?' 'What am I to turn my hand to? They are getting tired of my novels.' 'They don't read it,' he said to me of 'Esmond.' 'So you don't mean to publish my work?' he said once to a publisher in an open company." This was a strange ingenuous way of expressing his impatience, but we don't think he ever had a shadow of doubt about his literary capability, or about the convictions he expressed.

With the success of "Vanity Fair" he had his just share of renown, and the pecuniary rewards which fame brings: he had secured the certainty of comfort, if not of affluence, and proud and great men counted his acquaintance a distinction. But with the consciousness of his power and the favour of the public, the keen sense of his dependence on their tastes and whims stung him into a constant desire for some governmental post, the income of which would screen him and his girls, who were the mainspring of his solicitude, from any untoward fortune, should decrepitude or decay creep upon him. precariousness of literature, even at his own altitude, nettled him as it has disturbed many more, and casting his eye back on the traditions of his family, he considered it would be no disgrace for him to be in possession of a Civil Service permanency, which would relieve his mind of any dread if he should lose his hold of the public. Taking advantage of his acquaintance with the Marquis of Clanricarde, the Postmaster-General, he applied for the vacant assistant-secretaryship of the Post-office, and if the Marquis had had his own way, the novelist would doubtless have been appointed; but it is fortunate for his reputation that the official under the Marquis resisted the proposal on the ground that a trained post-office servant was required, and not a genius, who, though a genius, would have the elements of the system to learn before he could honestly earn his salt.

And that was not the last of his attempts in the same direction. On the 8th November, 1854, he wrote to Mr Reed, an American friend: "The secretaryship of our Legation at Washington was vacant the other day, and I instantly asked for it; but in the very kindest letter Lord Clarendon showed how the petition was impossible. First, the place was given away; next, it would not be fair to appoint out of the service. But the first was an excellent reason; not a doubt of it. So, if ever I come, as I hope and trust to do this time next year, it must be in my own coat, and not in the Queen's." Thackeray and Dickens were widely different men, and differed frequently in opinion, but on the subject of a nation's duty to its men of letters they were at one, and never flagged in persistent advocacy of increased state recognition. Dickens boldly declared he was not satisfied with the reward of his country; and Thackeray, referring to an article in The Examiner in 1850, said he did not see why men of letters should not very cheerfully accept all the honours, places, and prizes which they could get. "No man," he argued, "in other callings thinks himself degraded by receiving a reward from his government; nor, surely, need the literary man be more squeamish about pensions, and ribbons, and titles, than the ambassador, or general, or judge." One is surprised that he who was so skilful and merciless with the scalpel should have cared for distinctions whose emptiness he laid open; and regarding the article as a well pondered one; and published as the serious reflections of a great writer, it does wear a look of incongruity. At all events, his friends seem to have agreed that, whilst his notions of public preferment were quite admissible as theories, so far as they applied to himself, it were better they never burst the chrysalis. And whoever bethinks himself that a man's success is to be measured by his work and its results, that to Thackeray's bias towards procrastination was superadded a leaning to indolence, and that, therefore, in easy plenty his work was in danger of spareness and mediocrity, must concur in their opinion. Better a plucky and persevering ant than a civil service fossil, or a fossilised dilettante. For the aim of existence, it ought always to be insisted, is not happiness but duty.

In truth, however, there was no cause for anxiety on any prudential matter. His genius, in its own peculiar fields, reigned unchallenged. It met with universal recognition among all whose approbation he cared to secure; and the principles that usually regulate and determine fortune—talent and work—made it impossible for his financial position to involve the least apprehension. He was the favourite, as it was his ambition to be, of a small circle of intimates, and a "lion" of fashion; and though not popular with the mass—for he seemed too cynical for fustian—he was regarded even by them as a man of mark, and it behoved that he should be stared at as at least a block of stone, if his heroic stature and flowing locks had not of themselves commanded attention. In short, he had achieved distinction, and an income equal to his renown.

So that, if other things had been propitious, his domestic as well as his inner life ought to have been very happy. But other things were extremely unpropitious. His home life was early blighted by incurable affliction—affliction which had come like night upon the dawn of domestic felicity. And this brings us to review what we have perhaps too long delayed, the more important incidents of his private history. Shortly after the failure of *The Constitutional*, he fell in love with Miss Shawe, an Irish lady, daughter of Colonel Matthew Shawe, and he married her in 1837, when he, his mother,

and step-father, resided in Paris. In that same year he migrated from the French capital, where hitherto he had chiefly resided, to London, where he set up house first in Albion Street, and then in Great Coram Street. Here three daughters, Anne, Jane, and Harriet, were born to him. Living on terms of tenderest sympathy with his wife, who honoured him in the midst of his struggles, need we wonder that he should sound a faint echo of his short-lived happiness: "The humblest painter," he said. "be he ever so poor, may have a friend watching at his easel, or a gentle wife sitting by with her work in her lap, and with fond smiles or talk or silence cheering his labours."

But the felicity that sprang from radiant and sympathetic wifehood was soon to be snatched from him by a fate than which none more cruel is recorded in literary biography. Through imprudent exposure at a precarious time, his wife caught a cold which deranged both body and mind. Her illness before disease shewed its more certain phases was long and sore, and through it all Thackeray not only tended her with manly love and increasing watchfulness, but hoped and hoped with painful pertinacity, and like a man in decline refused to abandon his delusions. She never recovered to be either a companion to her husband or an instructor to her children, two of whom by the way, lived to solace their father in his solitude—one of them to follow him not unworthily in the uncertain ways of literature. When it became evident that she would not recover, she was placed under the care of a lady who made her halfconscious life conscious only of the ease and kindness of a world to which she is linked by the feeblest of ties;—and Thackeray went on for the rest of his life-walk alone.

There was a quiet manliness about him which restrained

his tongue in trial and sorrow; he rarely murmured about any of his griefs, but sometimes the soreness would ooze out with shame-faced reluctance. The shock he sustained by this calamity compelled him to leave "The Shabby Genteel" unfinished; and in making the announcement he modestly said it was interrupted at a sad period of the writer's life. The tale was touched again seventeen years afterwards, but so sensitive was the heart of the writer and so deep-seated the sore, that he had again to leave it incomplete.

It is in his ballads, of which he wrote a considerable number, some of them wet with honest sorrow, others as laughable and ludicrous as his impromptu doggerel; it is there, if anywhere, that the poignancy of his grief is traced, and always with a delicate hand. In "Bouillabaise" for instance, see how he bewails the solitude of home unblessed by the mateship of a companionable love:—

"Ah me! how quick the days are flitting!
I mind me of a time that's gone,
When here I'd sit as now I'm sitting,
In this same place, but not alone.
A fair young form was nestled near me,
A dear, dear face looked fondly up,
And sweetly spoke, and smiled to cheer me—
There's no one now to cheer my cup."

We have another touching reference to the same sad experiences in one of his latest "Roundabouts:"—"I own for my part," he says, "that in reading pages which this hand penned formerly, I often lose sight of the text under my eyes. It is not the words I see; but that past day; that bygone page of life's history; that tragedy, comedy it may be, which our little homecompany was enacting; that merry-making which we

shared; that funeral which we followed; that bitter, bitter grief which we buried."

Only once, so far as we can discover, did he' refer directly to the cloud which came and obscured his wife's reason. Mr W. B. Reed, the American who had the honour to enjoy his confidence, records this anecdote of him: "In our return journey to Philadelphia, Thackeray referred to a friend whose wife had been deranged for many years, hopelessly so; and never shall I forget the look and manner and voice with which he said to me, 'It is an awful thing for her to continue so to live. It is an awful thing for her so to die. But has it never occurred to you how awful a thing the recovery of lost reason must be? Without the consciousness of the lapse of time, she finds the lover of her youth a grey-haired old man and her infants young men and women. Is it not sad to think of this?""

For all that, he would have been the faint heart which he never was, if he had succumbed to despondency, or sat inactive like Melancholia moping over her misery. The natural "jollity" of his disposition asserted itself, and thenceforward his social cravings found tolerable satisfaction in the companionship of his children—the second of whom, we may mention, died young—of his associates and of his club, where his striking figure, his ready smile, and caustic humour invariably called forth admiration and reciprocal regard.

The keenness of his penetration and the vigour of his satire gave the unknowing world reason to call him a cynic. We do not say there was no foundation for the stigma, because his writings abound in flagrant contempt for recognised and fashionable habitudes, and he seemed to smirk at the clear-cut wickedness which he himself shaped with such adroit naturalness. But it was only a seeming:

For he had in truth a heart of great tenderness, and was as vexed as the true moralist can be at evil, though the wooden-headed stolidity of aristocratic sin made him hit hard and assume the plumes of one who mourned for human good as a thing not possible. His deportment too favoured in some degree the notion that he was saturated with the sourness of Diogenes. With feelings so tender, and a nature not unlightly strung, sanguine people, who see nothing but bloom and beauty in the world, and joy and purity in society, were astonished to look in vain at his sleeve for a glimpse of his heart. But surely it would have been an outrage on the philosophy he taught to have professed a warmth or pretended a gush over the impulsive spasms of a love or friendship, or even an acquaintanceship, which reason or experience convinced him to be unreal.

Mr Shirley Brooks, in a poem celebrating the pureheartedness of Thackeray, penned the following lines which may, we think, be accepted by the reader as an excellent refutation of his cynicism:—

"He was a cynic! By his life all wrought,
Of generous acts, mild words, and gentle ways;
His heart wide open to all kindly thought,
His hand so quick to give, his tongue to praise!

"He was a cynic! You might read it writ
In that broad brow crowned with its silver hair;
In those blue eyes, with childlike candour lit,
In that sweet smile his lips were wont to wear!

"He was a cynic! By the love that clung
About him from his children, friends, and kin;
By the sharp hand, light pen, and gossip tongue,
Wrought in him, chafing the soft heart within!"

But the judgment of men on the subject of his surli-

ness is changing; and we are bound to say it is now more just. Any acidity of speech or coldness of manner in him must not be deprecated as the outcome of a phlegmatic misanthrope, but as the honest and unabashed voice of a man who thought what he said, and was not ashamed to say it. Besides, grief sank deep in him without provoking ebullitions; private sorrows he reckoned secret, and bore in silence; and silent sorrows are not specially conducive either to a hail-fellow sort of salutation or a sparkling vein free of satire, any more than of inner equanimity.

In the "Roundabout Paper" to which we have referred, he confesses that the fact of there being no striking vicissitudes in his life only made his few sorrows the heavier. That was a modest enough admission. But after examining the incidents of his life, and the peculiar structure of his self-reliant mind, we think his griefs were great enough to depress and sadden any mind not supported by philosophy, or cheered by a tameless vivacity. They excited many apprehensions among his friends: he was of so genial a temper himself that no acquaintance could have regarded his misery without the sharpest pain. And let us here remark that we cannot sufficiently deplore, that a man who could gloss over the sorest wounds of others with much that was bland and humorous, should have left no record of his own-for as yet no satisfactory life of him has been published.

We are far from saying, however, that there were no gleams, or even few gleams, of brightness in his life. Every sound and good career brings its own beauty and joy. Perhaps his most radiant delights were those shed upon him by his admirers; and it is interesting to know that one of the first tokens of love and esteem reached him just when criticism was cold, and his advance

tardy. This recognition was from Edinburgh, a city that has always been prompt to encourage genius, in its own proud and stony manner. Thackeray was immensely appreciated there, partly we suspect because of the adaptability of his sly and sometimes grim humour to a Calvinistic race. An enthusiastic reader of "Vanity Fair" collected eighty half-crowns among an octogint of admirers, including Lord Jeffrey and Sir William Hamilton, bought an inkstand in the form of a silver statuette of *Punch*, and sent it to Thackeray, with the following inscription round the base:—

GULIELMO MAKEPEACE THACKERAY,

ARMA VIRUMQUE, GRATI NECNON GRATÆ EDINENSES,

LXXX.

D. D. D.

But besides these friends who admired him from afar, he was by this time becoming a popular member of bright metropolitan coteries. Popular as a boy on account of an exceptional mode of amusing, and popular as an art student who dispensed kindliness to all and help where it was needed, he now became a favourite amongst literary men, who appreciated the open candour and gentlemanliness and underlying gentleness and truth of his character. They, at least, saw nothing of the cur about him; and, indeed, from the commencement of his contributions to Punch, a suspicion prevailed among them, which, as we have seen, gradually deepened into a very obvious certainty, that, under his hard mask, there was not merely an agreeable soul, but a brain of the highest order. Matthew Higgins (Jacob Omnium), Sir William Stirling-Maxwell, at that time William Stir-

ling, and Russell Sturgis, a partner in the house of the Barings, were the first to encourage him in his earlier efforts. He repaid these gentlemen with gratitude, and they came to esteem him as a friend; and at the time we now write of, though his name was not quite familiar as a household word, he was on terms of intimacy or clubship with most of the known men in England. By no means a brilliant talker, he could yet hold his own by a certain adroitness of repartee and an even vein of humour, in the presence of which, aided by an undoubted potentiality of presence, mere sparkle of talk and splendour of accomplishment could make little headway. Even the most shining of society-men had got it into their heads that Thackeray might be laughing at them in their most sidereal flights of courtliness or platitude. Mr Trollope, in his recent account of him, records an anecdote which illustrates this point very well. "When he was in America," he says, "he met at dinner a literary gentleman of high character, middle-aged, and most dignified deportment. But he had a broken nose. At dinner he talked much of the tender passion, and did so in a manner which stirred up Thackeray's feeling of the ridiculous. 'What has the world come to,' said Thackeray out loud to the table, 'when two brokennosed old fogies like you and me sit talking about love to each other!' The gentleman was astounded, and could only sit wrapping his toga in silent dismay for the rest of the evening."

There can be no doubt, however, that he was desirable company; of that, there is no better evidence than the recollection of "living witnesses," and the diary of such a man as Macready, who says that within a few days in the year 1848 he met at various dinner parties Thackeray, Kinglake, Tennyson, Procter, Stansfeld, Maclise, Dickens, and a host of lesser lights.

144 William Makepeace Thackeray.

Yet, though fortune thus accumulated and friends increased, and though his sincerity, politeness, and humour won him numberless acquaintances, who were glad merely to say that they knew Thackeray, his intimates were never many. Douglas Jerrold said, "I have known Thackeray eighteen years, and don't know him yet." Sometimes reticent and even morose, he was yet more frequently frank and communicative; heartiness and a discreet openness predominated, as they always do in men of strong sensibilities. With friends he was homely and very grateful, and never forgot a good service. For instance, when fortune was gone, and he found himself in Paris in want, his tailor in the Rue Richelieu, instead of insisting on the payment of his account, offered him a thousand franc note. offer was accepted, and the money subsequently repaid; but the kindness of the tailor was too rare to be forgotten, and Thackeray immortalized the man of shears by dedicating "The Paris Sketch Book" to him. Then, when his brain was absorbed in "Pendennis," he was seized with a serious illness. Dr Elliotson saved his life; and when the great novel was finished, it was inscribed to the physician.

Greatness of soul, which is another name for unselfishness, is best shown in absolute freedom from the "superior vices." Although on one occasion he did wonder why Dickens' publisher sold five copies of his works for every one that his own publishers sold of his, Thackeray might yet be said to be free of envy; and he did not hesitate to tell an audience that his little girl had looked up in his face and said, "Papa, I like Mr Dickens' books much better than yours." Indeed, no author was more generous in the praise of his contemporaries. He was the first to defend "Boz" against the criticism of Jules Janin. He took special delight in the literateness of

Bulwer Lytton; but when Bulwer, in his memoir of Laman Blanchard, made some strictures on men of letters, Thackeray took up the cudgels against him, and penned a vigorous, searching, and in some respects inimitable defence of them, as well as a manly and touching excuse for the unfortunate subject of the memoir. For Dickens he cherished a deep and faithful regard, and but for a small dispute in connection with the Garrick Club, for the origin of which neither was to blame, they would always have been on terms of the closest intimacy. A few days before Thackeray's death, the two great men met in the vestibule of a club, and, says Mr Taylor, acting on the impulse of the moment, extended the hand of forgiveness and fellowship. Then, who does not know how Thackeray praised George Cruikshank and John Leech, with the former of whom he had learned etching when he "put himself up" at the Bedford, in Covent Garden, after his college life; or who has not heard of his friendliness to Miss Brontë in the days of her undiscovered power, when among the bleak moors of the West Riding she was secretly polishing her obscured gems? For many a weary day Charlotte saw him not, except through the fineness of her fervid fancy. Yet so strong an esteem did his friendship beget in her, that the second edition of her first great work "Jane Eyre," was dedicated to him whom she called "a regenerator, who was to put to rights the warped state of things." Perhaps it was to this kindliness which marked his relations with the meanest of his class, that he owed the favour with which he was regarded, just as the first forecasts of popularity were due to his abundant contempt for snobbery.

Concern for his two girls deepened with age, and constantly spurred him to independence. He was now well paid for his work, but like many literary men before and since, he had the faculty of expense, while he was at the same time haunted by the fear lest he or his children should come to want. He had tried the Government to open their doors, and failed; he must now lean on his own oars. And this was the best fate for him as for every mortal who would prefer to be quit of leading strings, and have the credit of his greatness set down to a luxuriant growth of individualism.

In 1851, therefore, he began to quarry a new vein. He lectured in Willis' Rooms to crowded and select audiences on the English humourists—Congreve, Addison, Steele; Prior, Gay, Pope; Hogarth, Smollett, and Fielding; and Sterne and Goldsmith. The lectures were brilliant in thought, and of a studied beauty and plainness of speech, and notwithstanding the high price of admission, and the counter-attraction of an exhibition, attracted an enormously intellectual and lucrative patronage. A contemporary reporter said the most interesting were those casual points which developed the individuality of the speaker—a very just remark, as any one may know who peruses "The Four Georges," and the novelist's other discourses. Successfully repeated in the Provinces, and in 1852 and 1853 in America—where Thackeray was warmly welcomed—the lectures of themselves vielded him a fair competency. In Edinburgh three parts of the population attended—a fact which Thackeray gratefully records. Other towns were equally demonstrative, and although his tours were not so overwhelmingly auspicious as the triumphal marches of Dickens, there were in the meanest place he visited abundant symptoms of reverence for his towering frame and shaggy crown and stedfast eye—the outward emblems of the will and power of a potent life devoted to morals and philosophy.

He was not averse to a repetition of the experiment, and a few years later, to equally appreciative audiences, he lectured on "The Four Georges," also in this country and in America. The lectures are all included in his published works.

It was more the matter than the manner that made the people flock to him as a lecturer, and in this he was greatly distinguishable from Dickens, whose sparkling harangues and studied intonation gave his recitations the fascination of a now fierce, now tender reality. Thackeray was solid in his matter, cold in his manner, and elegant in his style; his discourses were more like the confessions of a penetrating spectator to a set of intelligent and confidential friends than the professed exhibitions of a critic. The first series—the lectures on the humorists succeeded better than the second, except beyond the Atlantic, where the weakness, perfidy, violence, and vice of kings and their minions, exposed in their true colours, were sure to take, and call forth unstinted applause. Yet the lecturer seldom rose into animation except to denounce the passions and duplicity which disgraced the eminence of his subjects. His severity to the Hanoverians awoke considerable criticism at the time, especially among those who believed that the position of a monarch, whatever his morals may be, must necessarily beget reverence in his people. Thackeray had little esteem for some of the kingly brawls it was his honest aim to reprove; and he had the satisfaction to know that his adverse judges were both beclouded by prejudice and unfamiliar with the manner in which kings do sometimes acquit themselves. But nothing can be more appropriate or conclusive on this subject than his own defence at a public dinner in Edinburgh in 1857, when he said—"Suppose that I had spoken about George

IV. (in America) in terms of praise and affected reverence, do you believe they would have hailed his name with cheers, or have heard it with anything of respect? . . . We degrade our own honour and the sovereign's by unduly or unjustly praising him, and the mere slaverer and flatterer is one who comes forward, as it were, with flash notes and pays with false coin his tribute to Cæsar"with which, we imagine, most sensible men will agree. He confessed he felt somewhat on his trial for loyalty, but we hardly suppose his loyalty, any more than his sincerity, was ever doubted; it was his sensitiveness that was at fault-his impatience of any scenting at base motives; and had he been a very proud or careless man, he would have overlooked with scorn or unconcern any attempt to beat a sort of treasonable cynicism or dulled patriotism out of his zealous reproach and reluctant approbation of his country's kings.

While, however, he generally "took" well as a public speaker, he occasionally made gross and amusing failures. Mr J. T. Fields records that when he went to Manchester to make a speech at the founding of the Free Library there, he rose, and, for three minutes, spoke in a clear, charming, and absolutely perfect manner, but after giving a look of comic despair at the ceiling, he crammed his hands into his trousers' pockets and deliberately sat down. So common were these aberrations of his oratory, that his unfinished speeches became matter of notoriety.

The remaining incidents of his life may be more briefly summarised. In 1857, when his knowledge, taste, and penetration, had brought him his full complement of fame, he was selected Liberal candidate for the representation of Oxford in opposition to Mr Cardwell. The contest was conducted with characteristic dignity on his part, but he was beaten by 1070 votes to 1017. Defeat

did not deter him, however, from making one of the most graceful post-poll speeches in the annals of electioneering.

Settling down to fresh literary work he published, in 1858, "The Virginians," which takes up some points in the story of "Esmond." The Warringtons are grandsons of Esmond and Lady Castlewood, and the Baroness Bernstein is the flippant and frivolous Beatrix Esmond, who had been wife to a tutor and a bishop, and was now the old and withered spouse of a wealthy baron. In 1860, induced to it by the success of Dickens' periodical, All the Year Round, Smith & Elder started the Cornhill Magazine with Thackeray as editor. The price was only a shilling, and the contents being as bright and bulky as those of the old half-crown magazines, its success was enormous. Mr J. T. Fields says the announcement that the sale of the first number had reached 110,000 copies made Thackeray half delirious with joy. It was then he rushed off to Paris to blow off some of the excitement. "Great heavens!" he exclaimed, "where will this tremendous circulation stop?" And he could not refrain from sharing his enthusiasm with his readers when, in a paper "On some late victories," he says-"The victories which I wish especially to commemorate in this paper, are the six great, complete, prodigious, and undeniable victories, achieved by the corps which the editor of the Cornhill Magazine has the honour to command. . . . I fancy the Imperator standing on the steps of the temple (erected by Titus) on the Mons Frumentarius, and addressing the citizens—'Quirites!' he says, 'in our campaign of six months we have been engaged six times, and in each action have taken near upon a hundred thousand prisoners! Go to! What are other magazines compared to our magazine? (Sound

trumpeter!) What banner is there like that of *Cornhill?* You philosopher yonder—Do you know what it is to have a hundred thousand *buyers?*—(Cries of "No!"—"Pooh!"—"Yes, upon my honour!"—"Oh! come")—I say more than a hundred thousand purchasers! and, I believe, as much as a million readers! (Immense sensation). To these have we said an unkind word? We have enemies: Have we hit them an unkind blow? Have we sought to pursue party aims; to forward private jobs; to advance selfish schemes? The only persons to whom, wittingly, we have given pain, are some who have volunteered for our corps, and of these volunteers we have had *thousands*."

It was one of the luckiest hits of his life. In the course of the two years during which he acted as editor, he removed to the neighbourhood of the Palace of Kensington, where he rebuilt a mansion, and made it a fitting habitation for a man of refined tastes in literature and Though he was aided by the best litterateurs in the country—Tennyson, Mrs Browning, Matthew Arnold, Mrs Beecher Stowe, Mary Howitt, Mrs Gaskell, Charles Lever, Lord Houghton, Laurence Oliphant, and A. Trollope, being among the contributors—yet "the reading, accepting, refusing, losing, and finding the works of other people" became an irksome task. It pained him beyond endurance to refuse the manuscripts of his correspondents, especially the poorer class of them, and he has a "Roundabout," entitled "Thorns in the Cushion," the next to the one last mentioned, in which the scruples of a soft-hearted editor are very forcibly illustrated. "How am I to know," he says, "(though, to be sure, I begin to know now), as I take the letters off the tray, which of these envelopes contains a real bona fide letter, and which a thorn? One of the best invitations this year I mistook for a thorn-letter, and kept it without opening." And then he goes on to give a specimen of what he calls a thorn-letter, in which a poor governess who has a sick and widowed mother to maintain, and little brothers and sisters who look to her, pleads with him to "cast a kind glance over my poem, and if you can help us, the widow and the orphans will bless you." He could not resist such appeals, and, it is said, frequently sent the money out of his own pocket to the needy contributors, and their contributions to the wastebasket. In 1862, therefore, he resolved to "send off the chair and the great Cornhill Magazine tin-box, with its load of care." In his closing address he announced his intention of beginning the publication of a tale, on which he had been engaged for years. This was "Denis Duval," four numbers of which he had written, when death cut off the bright charm which held his admirers in spell. Like Dickens, he died in harness.

It is not said that Thackeray succeeded well as an editor. We fancy he had too little decision and activity for that. Nor can it be said that as a ballad-writer he ranks high. Indulging occasionally in rhyme from boyhood, he produced several pieces of varied excellence in the course of his life—some of them not even very good rhyme, but mere strings of satirical allusions, or a lashing rebuke, or a piece of fun. His lines hardly ever attain a very musical flow; and with a few striking exceptions, they are at the best but laboured improvements of the impromptu doggerel with which he sometimes amused a dinner-party. There were, however, some striking exceptions, and before we close this sketch we must refer to the best of them. The ballad of "Bouillabaisse," is universally admitted to be his best. After some stanzas relating to Parisian customs of the olden time, the lines betray an intenser feeling than most of the contributions of the "weeping" school. We have already quoted his reference to the "fair young face that nestled near him," and we may add these verses:—

"Where are you, old companions trusty
Of early days here met to dine?
Come, waiter! quick, a flagon crusty;
I'll pledge them in the good old wine.
The kind old voices and old faces,
My memory can quick retrace;
Around the board they take their places,
And share the wine and Bouillabaisse.

"There's Jack has made a wondrous marriage;
There's laughing Tom is laughing yet;
There's brave Augustus drives his carriage;
There's poor old Fred in the Gazette;
O'er James's head the grass is growing:
Good Lord! the world has wagged apace,
Since here we set the claret flowing,
And drank and ate the Bouillabaisse."

There was always the sad vein in whatever came from his pen. Nothing was without its vanity, any more than without its comic element or urbanity. Wrong and vanity! *Vanitas vanitatum!* These were his texts; and to them he adhered till the end of his chapter. In another of his versified prose pieces he says:—

"Methinks the text is never stale,
And life is every day renewing,
Fresh comments on the old, old tale,
Of Folly, Fortune, Glory, Ruin.

"Hark to the preacher preaching still!

He lifts his voice and cries his sermon,
Here at St Peter's of Cornhill,
As yonder on the Mount of Hermon.

"For you and me to heart to take
(O dear beloved brother readers)
To-day as when the good king spake,
Beneath the solemn Syrian cedars."

But this was not the same sense of mundane emptiness as the philosophic king's. His was the bitter fruit of selfish indulgence, in no form of which could a rational being, to say nothing of the wisest of men, expect to find ease and contentment. He found that there was nothing new under the sun, and that from none of the pleasures which he tried could he extract his fill of joy or peace. He concluded, therefore, that all was vanity. Thackeray, on the other hand (the reader will pardon the comparison for the sake of the truth it contains), harped upon the same string and fulminated his anathemas not because he had tried anything or found anything awanting, but because the human race were going after Solomon's gods, and pampering the same appetites, and, unlike him, appearing to be immensely satisfied. Each man, he said to himself, is the sun of his own system; he obstinately withholds his gaze from the greater orb; and he is pleased with the mournful illusion.

In the majority of his ballads (why they should have got that name we can't quite make out), he is more often humorous than plaintive; and he has really succeeded in producing one or two comic ditties of an unusually intellectual cast—that is to say, the skill in the brogue of the Irish, and the dialect of the other pieces is superior to the poetry of the lilts he no doubt intended should excel. But there are few of these very admirable productions. We like much better the verses in which he hits out harder and straighter blows at iniquity than are to be found even in his satirical writings. On Pallis Court, for example, these blighting censures fell:—

"O Pallis Court you move My pity most profound, A most amusing sport You thought it, I'll be bound, To saddle hup a three-pound debt With two-and-twenty pound.

"Good sport it is to you, To grind the honest poor, To pay their just or unjust debts, With eight hundred per cent. for hor': Make haste to get your costes in, They will not last much mor'!

"Come down from that tribewn, Thou shameless and unjust; Thou swindle, picking pockets in The name of Truth august; Come down thou hoary blasphemy, For die thou shalt and must."

The more prominent of his so-called ballads are "Jacob Omnium's Hoss," from which the above extract is taken; "Bow Street Ballads," "Love Songs made Easy," "The Knight and the Lady of Bath," "The Chronicle of the Drum," and "The Great Cossack Epic."

It only remains to be said, that of his inner life, except what one encounters in his works, little can be advanced. Though his home had been divested of its chief ornament when he was still a young man, he did not cease to find its atmosphere hallowed and hallowing. He devoted himself to his children, the two girls left motherless by their mother's calamity, and of whom he said-

> "I thought as day was breaking, My little girls were waking, And smiling and making, A prayer at home for me."

So he sang in the "White Squall." The whole love of his heart was lavished on them; it had no other outlet; and we may imagine the keen delight with which so proud and indulgent a father would welcome the appearance of one of his daughters in the field where he himself had gleaned such harvests. That was when his eldest daughter published "Elizabeth" in the Cornhill.

What his religious beliefs were we have few indications, and possibly as little to do; but no sketch of a character can be complete without that secret which moulds a man's life and guides his conduct. The story of Thackeray's spirituality, however, remains for some informed biographer to tell. As disclosed in his works it is of a slightly enigmatic kind. As we have seen, he had a horror of cant, and was even ashamed at catching himself in a "melting mood." But the author of "Rab and his Friends" records an anecdote which throws upon this matter a great deal of light, and light of the pure and true kind. In the essay by him and Mr Lancaster this passage occurs: "We cannot resist recalling one Sunday evening in December when he was walking with two friends along the Dean road to the west of Edinburgh—one of the noblest outlets of any city. It was a lovely evening, such a sunset as one never forgets, a rich dark bar of cloud hovered over the sun, going down behind the Highland hills, lying bathed in amethystine bloom; between this cloud and the hills there was a narrow slip of the pure ether, of a tender cowslip colour, lucid, and as if it were the very body of heaven in its clearness; every object standing out as if etched upon the sky. The north-west end of Corstorphine hill with its trees and rocks, lay in the heart of this pure radiance, and there a wooden crane, used in the quarry, was so placed as to assume the figure of a cross; there it was unmistakeably lifted up against the crystalline sky. All three gazed at it silently. As they gazed he gave utterance in a tremulous, gentle, and rapid voice, to what all were feeling, in the word 'CALVARY.'"

One of the best remembered traits of De Witt is that he was "careful of his health, and negligent of his life." Thackeray was careless of his health, for he ate well and took little exercise, even after a serious attack which interrupted the progress of "Pendennis"—an attack which should have taught him, if nothing else, a rigid hygiene. When in town, his diversion, if he required any, was the play, or the confab of the clubs, or the Charterhouse on Founder's day; and if he indulged himself in outdoor recreation, his favourite haunts were not in alleys and by-paths, the localities where Dickens' fearless visage was familiar, but in Pall Mall, Brompton, Greenwich, and Richmond. In his habits he was essentially a town and somewhat fashionable man, and with his towering frame, uplifted and spectacled head, he always wore the port and charge of a gentleman.

He did a good deal of travelling in his day, but rather disliked sightseeing. He was twice in America—in 1852 and in 1856—but came back without visiting Niagara. His visits to Paris were frequent and refreshing, and have already been referred to. In 1843 he took a trip into Belgium, in the course of which he was robbed of his purse, and narrowly escaped getting into a scrape at Lille. In 1844 he went to Grand Cairo by way of Lisbon, Athens, Constantinople, and Jerusalem, having been presented with a free passage in the steamers of the Oriental Company. In 1853 he started on a Swiss tour with his children, and it was "when he strayed from them into a little wood" near Berne that the story of "The Newcomes," published in 1855, was revealed to him.

The last of his recorded travels was an excursion into the Netherlands during his editorship of the *Cornhill* an excursion his overworked frame and harassed brain sorely needed.

In stature he was tall and commanding, and he walked erect. With grey eyes—not over luminous—and a noble brow, his appearance was confident, but never conceited or aggressive. He wore long hair, and, but for a small whisker, shaved clean. His features, if anything, were immobile; the nose, which had been fractured in youth at the Charterhouse, was like Milton's, "a thoughtful one;" and the nostrils were wide and full, as are those of all men of genius, according to Balzac. The description of him by an American hand, is perhaps as accurate as any, though a good deal freer than most: "As for the man himself, he is a stout, healthful, broad-shouldered specimen of a man, with cropped grevish hair, and keenish grey eyes, peering very sharply through a pair of spectacles that have a very satiric focus. He seems to stand strongly on his own feet, as if he would not be easily blown about or upset, either by praise or pugilists." The best busts of him are those by Marochetti in Westminster Abbey, and by Durham in the possession of the Garrick Club. Boehm made a statuette of him in bronze—said to be a reliable though not flattering likeness. The portraits of him are numerous.

These are some crowded particulars of the life of this great genius which was blotted out of this world on the Christmas Eve of 1863. Though his health had not been good for some time—(he had often to dictate to his daughter from bed)—his death occurred with startling suddenness. He retired to rest uncomplaining—though he must have suffered great pain—declining even his servant's offer to

sit by him; and on the morning of Christmas Day he was found dead in bed. So natural was the posture in which he died-so painless had the separation been-that it was only after his valet had found the coffee he had set for him untasted that he was discovered to be no more. The announcement of his death shocked the nation on the morning of its most festal day; for although his face and form were known to the select few rather than to the general public, his generous mind and honest purpose, to say nothing of his great genius, had endeared him to numberless admirers who had never seen him. Effusion on the brain was the cause of death: his brain itself was found to weigh 58½ oz. He had been timeously warned of the approach of disease, but he had not preserved the regimen or habits suitable either to his not over-robust constitution or his sedentary life. As early as 1834, in a letter to the American friend already mentioned, he said, "I am to-day just out of bed after another, about the dozenth, severe fit of spasms which I have had this year." And so it went on until the close.

The day of his funeral was beautiful, and the 1500 persons at his grave included nearly all the genius and intellect of England. Although there was a proposal to lay him beside the remains of Goldsmith, whom he loved, within the precincts of the Temple Church, amid

"Those bricky towers
The which on Thames broad back do ride,
Where now the student lawyers have their bowers,
Where whilom wont the Templar knights to bide,
Till they decayed through pride,"

it was ultimately considered advisable by his friends to inter his remains in Kensal Green, where a suitable monument marks his last resting-place.

It would be trite to say that Thackeray's place in literature is a high one, or that he will rank equally high while the language lasts. The spirit and the sharpness of his satire, the strength of his invective, the closeness and ease of his observation, the quaint and quiet aptness of his illustrations, and the abundant and abiding pleasantries of his wit, have secured him his proper niche in our temple of fame. But when his biography comes to be written, we are much mistaken if he be not as justly esteemed as a man as he is revered as a classic. while—as the Jesuit Rapin said of Xenophon—he had a purity of language, a natural and agreeable composition, a rich and easy vein, full of admirable sense, a clear imagination, and a curious turn of wit, he was an equally notable example to the age in which he lived of sincerity, probity, and virtue. "He was the best good man with the worst natured muse." But the muse, if conscious of the temper, felt its harshness as alien to the consistent tenderness of her poet; and we question much if society will ever be ministered to by a physician who will so sincerely compassionate the sores it was his duty to probe as did William Makepeace Thackeray.



CHARLES DICKENS.



CHARLES DICKENS.

CHARLES JOHN HUFFHAM DICKENS (the two intermediates he rarely used, or if he did, only the second, which he spelt Huffam) was born at Landport, Portsea, on Friday, 7th February 1812. His father was John Dickens, a clerk in the Navy-pay Office, and his mother Elizabeth Barrow, a lady whom the elder Dickens had met, through her brother Thomas, a clerk in Somerset House. Charles was the second of eight, who, with the exception of Letitia, are all dead. The eldest, Fanny, born 1810, became a distinguished pupil at the Royal Academy of Music; of the others, Frederick, born 1820, held an appointment in the War Office; Alfred, born 1822, was an engineer; and Augustus, born 1827, went out to serve a railway company in Chicago.

Besides Charles, his father was the only member of the family endowed with anything above mediocrity. He was a man of considerable penetration, great moral perception, and fair reading; but his sagacity was travestied by the whimsicality of his phrase, which was partly idiomatic, partly cockney, and partly of an egotistic kind. Indeed, whatever parts he possessed, were hopelessly obscured by a heavy blending of eccentricity. We may here state the few incidents in his career essential to our sketch of his son. Two years after the birth of Charles he was placed on duty in Chatham dockyard, whereupon

he removed his family to a white-washed, plaster-fronted house in the Brook, next door to a Baptist chapel, of which Mr Giles, who became Charles's teacher, was minister. Here he became involved in pecuniary difficulties, which resulted in his incarceration in the Fleet in 1822, just a year after his recall to Somerset House, and the transference of his household to Bayham Street, Camden Town, one of the poorest places in that suburb. Before he left Marshalsea Prison, he drew up a petition to the king, praying for a bounty to enable the prisoners to drink his Majesty's health on his birthday--an incident of which Dickens junior laid hold in "David Copperfield," where he makes Micawber, for whom, on many occasions, his father had unconsciously sat, petition for the abolition of imprisonment for debt. He was enabled to guit prison, whither his wife and younger children had accompanied him, through an opportune legacy of some hundreds. It appears that the misfortune and the shame, as well as the burden of his increasing family, must have lowered his self-respect and blunted his perceptions, at least for a time; otherwise he would certainly have scrupled to see his eldest son, of whom he was rather proud in his own way—especially as a comic singer, and reciter of smart comic pieces-degraded to a blackingdrudge and manipulator of Lamert's Labels. For the wrong and mental suffering thus inflicted on his boy, who was only ten at the time, there was nevertheless ample palliation in the fact of his own entanglements, which were quite sufficient to dim any ordinary discernment. The alacrity with which he opposed his wife, when she wished Charles to return to the same drudgery after the healing up of a quarrel between him and Charles's employers—one of whom was a cousin by marriage—is also an exonerating circumstance. The father's fortunes

gradually improved after he received the legacy. He soon became a reporter on the *Morning Chronicle*, and his connection with the press continued off and on until he died, some years before his son.

However bitterly he felt that the sorrows of boyhood were in part inflicted by his father, Dickens respected him more as the years increased, and to his biographer Mr Forster, to whose excellent work we have come under repeated obligations, he gave him this character:-"I know my father to be as kind-hearted and generous a man as ever lived in the world. Everything that I can remember of his conduct to his wife, or children, or friends, in sickness or affliction, is beyond all praise. By me, as a sick child, he has watched night and day, unweariedly and patiently many nights and days. He never undertook any business, charge, or trust, that he did not zealously, conscientiously, punctually, and honourably discharge. His industry has always been untiring." In truth there is no saying how many of Dickens' quaintest notions and choicest expressions can be traced to his father's odd and sometimes addled head, from which a strange stream of unworkable theories, and a unique mixture of sentiment and prose constantly flowed. There was a certain epigrammatic evolution about that brain of his which seldom failed to excite pity or awake a smile. For instance, when trundled off to the Marshalsea, after he had spent some sad days in the sponginghouse, he declared to Charles, who was for some time the courier betwixt home and the prison, that the sun was set upon him for ever! And he taught him a lesson in morals too, which shows a glimmering of very distinct light amidst the gloom of his vagaries, namely-"To take warning by the Marshalsea, and to observe that if a man had twenty pounds a year, and spent nineteen pounds nineteen shillings and sixpence, he would be happy, but that a shilling spent the other way would make him wretched." This warning, conveyed amid the meanness and poverty of which borrowed forks and an empty grate were the emblems, took a firm hold on the mind of his young, but keenly observant son.

Dickens' recollections of his mother seem to have been always embittered by the negligent care with which he was nurtured, and especially by the warm obstinacy with which, on an occasion already referred to, she urged his return to the blacking factory. "I never afterwards forgot-I never shall forget-I never can forget-that my mother was warm for my being sent back." This may seem an unnaturally hostile reminiscence to have cherished, particularly in view of the assiduity with which she had at first taught him the rudiments of English and Latin, but there must be taken along with it the obtrusive sensitiveness which drove the boy Dickens, like many other precocious boys, to feel endless smarting antagonisms between the yearnings and uncongenial surroundings of his susceptible soul.

Dickens had keen sight and good memory even as a child. The snow, amidst which he was removed from Portsmouth at the age of two, his infantine struggles to walk, the parade at Portsmouth, and many other objects which elude the apprehension of most men, impressed themselves strongly on his mind, and in his most flourishing days he could with ease recount the sights and sounds which affected him as a child.

At Chatham he was placed at a preparatory day-school, kept by a female up a stair, over a dye-house, where he specially remembers a woman who wore a brown beaver bonnet, and a pug which had a baleful bark.* He seems

^{* &}quot;Reprinted Pieces, Charles Dickens' Edition," 287.

to have saluted the bonnet and been accosted by this bark for a year or two. He was then committed to the care of Mr Giles the Baptist minister, a fair teacher, with a healthy breezy influence about him, who, when "Pickwick" was half finished, sent "the inimitable Boz" a silver snuff-box. Giles was an inveterate consumer of Irish "blackguard," and by his unpropitious gift inveigled his former pupil into the same vile habit, which he actually indulged for several years.

This was virtually all the "schooling" which Dickens received, for, by the time he figured at Wellington House Academy, after his father's liberation, his stern and lonely life had unfolded things to his emotional nature which books but lightly touched. The brightness of childhood was more than dimmed by frequent ailments and recurring spasms, and although in these he was closely tended, especially by his father, it does not seem that his sickliness was ever soothed by too much sympathy. A poor, queer, sickly boy, whose plentiful love became locked in his inner fastnesses by the coldness which bound him in! Rather cold ground it was for the poetic affections to prosper—affections which are deeply sown and need warm suns to bring up the braird. But it was, perhaps, all the better for his fancy. Left to himself, and cut off by his infirmities from the ardent play of his equals, the boy was early driven within the sport and wonder of childish reflection and aspiration, and speculation. Reasoning involved him in discontent and self-consciousness, and speculation of itself forced an outburst for the fancy; intellectual apprehensions matured, æsthetic appreciation quickened. He was awed by the might of the military; his pulse quickened and his cheek flushed when he heard the voice or felt the breath of the sea; the lanes and woods, with their honeysuckle and briar, wooed and won him, and till death he loved them most; and in the matter of reading, nothing gave the isolated heart such thrills as reading "Tom Jones" or "Uncle Toby" in a garret, or under a tree, or in the shade of Rochester Cathedral.

Chatham, in short, where the thousand long days of childhood were passed, fastened upon his most faithful love. His earliest pleasures were plucked under its walls, and he drew his last breath amid the same sweet scenes which undimmed memories haunted. At the age of ten he was taken to London, where, he says, he found life "sloppier" than he expected. His father's straits were at this time becoming narrower, his mother announced a seminary for young ladies by means of a brass plate, and Charles, full of dismallest forebodings, betook himself of a morning to cleaning his father's boots and his own, "looking after his younger brothers and sisters (now six in all), and going on such poor errands as arose out of our poor way of living." Mrs Dickens' establishment entrapped nobody, but the prison took in her husband, and Charles, after having explored, in many a stolen excursion, the slums about St Giles', Seven Dials, &c., and hung all sorts of mystical things round the dome of St Paul's, which he gazed at from Camden Town with open-mouthed veneration, just as he used to view the sea from afar, was engaged to the makers of blacking at something over six shillings per week. At first he slept at home, which comprised two parlours in Gower Street, whence he had carried all the books and furniture to a queer pawnbroker, who, having a certain wayward eruditeness about him, loved to hear him decline musa and dominus; and then, when home had been broken up, and the family were installed in the Marshalsea, where old Dickens was expiating his debts, Charles was accommodated in the lodgings of a reduced lady, who, in after years, became known as Mrs Pipchin in "Dombey." Upon the whole, the lad's life could hardly have been blacker; he had no encouragement or counsel of any kind, and but poor and stinted fare. Sometimes he dined off bread, cheese, and ale; sometimes off a four-penny plate of beef. Yet the incitements to wrong-doing which chequered every movement of his freedom, left his native purity unsullied, and he never yielded to any evil except when he forfeited his dinner for the sake of stale pastry. He abhorred his employment, yet he was not content until he had mastered its dirty details and acquired deftness in his drudgery. And in this he manifested that truly royal spirit which disdains the lowly functions which Fate or Fortune imposes. The least taint of its vulgarity, or the meanness of the operatives never defiled him. was only his pride that suffered; the degraded routine thrust arrows through him; they stuck in his flesh, the rust of them eating into his very soul. He says:*-"The deep remembrance of the sense I had of being utterly neglected and hopeless, of the shame I felt in my position, of the misery it was to my young heart to believe that, day by day, what I had learned, and thought. and delighted in, and raised my fancy and emulation up by, was passing away from me, never to be brought back any more, cannot be written."

Poverty and vulgarity thus chafing his spirit, and his spirit fretting because of its limitations, it was impossible but that they should in some measure affect, though they did not sully, a nature in which there was little of the harshness or coarseness that hemmed it in. Still, with

^{*} Forster's "Life of Dickens," i., p. 33.

his keen observation, which enabled him at the age of nine to take exact photographs of all faces, and fields, and fabrics, and his sure intuition by which human antagonisms, intricacies, and deceptions were scrutinised in the scanning, his very meanness contained the elements of a liberal education. There was no moral obliquity or gangrenous subjectivity about him, so that the foul forces to which circumstances exposed him were harmless in their operation, and the more evil that he saw the more did he revolt from it, the more fully did his own nature expand, and experience ripen to the sickle of his thriving powers. Every new lodging harboured a chapter of novelties, amply compensating for the famine of primers and advanced readers for which his soul hungered. If men are moulded and fitted for their work by the outrageous incidents of an adverse fate, Dickens was a forcible example of it. But neither was he, nor is any man who has been in the desert and thirsted—in the battle and fought—the worse for the discipline. Independent of the mere moral training, he was urged by the agony of experience to paint poor drudges in the thick of the conflict who had no hope of clearing it; and his pictures were all the more graphic, and his sympathy the sweeter, since they were chastened by his own sorrows. No doubt adversity bred discontent and sourness. It often does that where the fight is too keen. In the young heart it sometimes acts like slugs at the root, unless the robustness of the plant defies their gnawing. Dickens was fortunately of the hardier kind. He did not attempt to throttle his rising spirit, or stifle its murmurs. He probably could not if he would; for even in his after-life he did not let discontent slumber. If he had had no natural pride in his boyhood, envy would still have pricked him out of obscurity. If his restlessness had

subsided, or his tastes, of which there had already been many glimmerings - for even with Mr Lamert, the blacking cousin, he was known as "the young gen'l'man"-been subverted, a moral aspiration and the hope of brightness and greatness must have been pretty well nigh crushed. The mechanical life of a drudge, especially a young drudge, affords vast opportunities for thinking and dreaming—and groaning too. Where a process has been acquired, and the novelty and interest of the acquisition lost, the fingers follow their task like so many spindles unconsciously controlled by the accustomed will, while the mind repairs to the bright parterres and ambrosial ambuscades of the fancy, as the serener sphere where present sorrows are obliterated. What absurdities it there feeds upon the generous youth who has passed through that mortifying education well knoweth. But what else can an anxious and impatient aspirant do? Drudgery requires no superintending brain, and the brain must either browze on its vacuity or the anguish of its drudgery if debarred from the sweeter succulence of its fancies. The heart is stung because the machine is fit for nobler work. Surely the best balsam for it is in the wild desire and longings of youth—the transports of courage and romance—the great universe of possibility.

Dickens' haunts amongst the lanes of Kent converged at Gad's Hill, where a picturesque house of vast view basked in the summer's sun amid rich and active scenery. Of this place he became enamoured. He had often scanned it as a passer-by. It was an old place, with much of parasitic vegetation about it—just the thing to excite the castle-building of a sanguine and courageous boy. In the rose-coloured dreams with which toil was irradiated he did not cease to hover o'er it; the memory of its many charms mellowed his bitterest trials;

it was a powerful compulsitor to energy and action. "If you were to be very persevering," he said to himself, "and were to work hard, you might some day come to live in it." And in thirty years he did.

Consoled by such hopes and reminiscences he had to bend to his lot, which was enlivened only by some comic singing and humorous recitations at his godfather's, a rigger at Limehouse, where he had an appreciative audience in a discerning boat-builder, who declared him to be a "progidy." He enjoyed these visits immensely, because of the uniform kindness he received, and the journeys on which they took him through St Giles' and Seven Dials, for the stern realities of which he thus early showed a strong predilection. "Good heaven!" he said, with characteristic earnestness, "what wild visions of prodigies of wickedness, want, and beggary arose in my mind out of that place!" The lowest haunts of the vilest possessed a wild attraction for him; and it is not unreasonable to conclude that it was in those miserable localities that he felt the first fluttering of the wish to be the apostle of that wretched population, whose rags and filth and want he was ever ready to compassionate, while he dragged their crimes before the horrified gaze of a reprobating race. It was about this time also that his theatrical partialities developed themselves. He had been in a theatre when six years of age, and the magical flare of the lights, the bewildering proscenium, the dresses, the people, the music, the hum and the noise, seem to have haunted him until he was again in the glare. What indicates the vividness of the impression thus left on his mind is the fact that before leaving Chatham he had written a tragedy called "Misnar," and of course attained vast distinction for that childish performance. His relation Lamert, a brother of the blacking people, made and painted a small

theatre for him to beguile the tedium of Bayham Street, where, devoid of occupation or companions, his mind was beginning to simmer in a perpetual boil of desire. The want of companions was not a great one, if we regard it as throwing him more upon his own resources, which by-and-by *forced* a marvellous plethora of companionship and entertainment. At the same time his isolation and premature reflectiveness made some of the woof grow dark in the weft of his life.

While he was thus miserably unhappy as a "labouring hind," at the age of ten, in the service of "Murdstone and Grinby," and mingled tears with the rinsing-water of the bottles, even the misery of it made his observation the keener, and its range the wider. Discomfort, disparity, distress did more for his genius than if he had been fondled of rank and fortune. They made it flower soon, and imparted singular clearness and vivacity to its fruit. Everything he wrote had its origin and type in reality, and his own real and bitter experience was the great source of that unlaboured pathos which invests his best characters with unique charms.

Every man who reads his life properly, and who regards duty and not happiness as the great aim, will agree that hardness and bitterness, coldness and carelessness have an invaluable influence on character—pumicestones rubbing off the excrescences, smoothing down the irregularities and scars—leaving the man on whose true nature they act with better resolves and higher ends to fight for. Dickens was only a boy, but he had the mind to perceive that the black clouds were pierced by the rays of a bright hovering purpose, so that whatever came to his hand he did well and deftly. As "David Copperfield" he says:—"Whatever I have tried to do in life, I have tried with all my heart to do well. What

I have devoted myself to I have devoted myself to completely—never to put one hand to anything on which I could not throw my whole self, and never to affect depreciation of my work, whatever it was, I find now to have been my golden rules."

Another rule which he learned to observe very early was: never to be appalled by any circumstance whatever. Circumvented by misfortune, free of ties and restraints, open to vice, crime his daily example, he yet elected purity and industry as his kindred portion, and with an aggressive confidence in his powers, mustered fierce determination to baffle the designs of fate. How remarkably were his sharp firm face, his fixed look, and impetuous gait the exponents of his temper! No obstacle could deter, or difficulty daunt that man!

This determination and restlessness were powerfully aided by his cheerfulness, which, when drudgery did not drag him down, was copious and comical, whether in physical frolic, or the minor athletics of mirth, or in sequestered feasts over George Colman's "Broad Grins," one of the first books he loved. None of his juvenile sports had any guile—the young light never flared with the coruscations of frivolity. There was a singular average of goodness about him all his life through. He certainly never rose to the higher reaches of saintliness or philosophy; yet from first to last reverence, goodness, and philosophy had sufficient growth in him to make these qualities remarkable.

Capacity for work and capacity for enjoyment were linked together; the one fed upon necessity, the other upon opportunity. Any mischief that was in him had its manifestations only during the Wellington House Academy period—that is in the course of his fourteenth and fifteenth years, when his father, at last aroused to

his neglect, had sent him to school. The Academy, it may be here mentioned, is the subject of a lively sketch in an early number of Household Words, and also afforded scenes for Salem House in "David Copperfield." The master of it seems to have been an ignorant Welshman, who, while scourging the boarders, left the day-scholars unscathed in case of tale-bearing. Dickens, then described as a handsome curly-headed boy, does not seem to have acquired much by method at his seminary. But he indulged his playfulness, kept white mice, and made them drive pumps and small boats; wrote small tales, and mounted miniature theatres, where the "Millar and his Men" was performed—himself taking a chief part. This sort of amusement, mostly of a puerile kind, was continued in a matured form far into manhood, especially in the society of his children, though ultimately his capacity for enjoyment was outlived by his greed of work. One of his schoolfellows, writing to Mr Forster, said Dickens was probably connected with every mischievous prank in the school; but the pranks were of a mild type, consisting only of teaching his schoolfellows a lingo, and talking to them in this improvised jargon so as to excite attention while passing along the streets, making them snigger in church at the mention of potatoes to dinner, and simulating beggars to old ladies, whose charity he declined on the rare occasions when it was proffered by merrily running away.

It is, however, more important to note the first trace of that peculiar humour which with their exquisite pathos and multifarious character sold his books by tens of thousands. Here we think it lies in his letter to a schoolboy, surnamed Thomas ("leg." meaning "legend:")—"Tom,—I am quite ashamed I have not returned your Leg., but you shall have it by Harry to-morrow.

If you would like to purchase my Clavis you shall have it at a very *reduced price*, cheaper in comparison than a Leg.—a *wooden* leg. I have weighed yours every Saturday night.—Yours, &c."*

These, then, are the leading incidents of his boyhood. We do not care to challenge his belief that the remembrance of that early time, which should have been filled with auroral light, and "the sounds of elfland faintly blowing" in his last years, added bitterness to the growing sluggishness of imagination. He ought to have known that best himself. But if that were so, his moral nature was less robust, and he derived feebler consolation from philosophy than one might suppose. It cannot be denied that his young life was a succession of miseries, and developed restlessness and extreme sensitiveness; but the activity in which these things flowered gave versatility to his genius, variety to his conceptions, and endued startling experiences and extravagant pictures with a realistic colouring; and instead of graining the wainscot of his life with a sombre shade, it should unquestionably have imparted to it a light and airy tint. To wear a healthier tone would also have been more just to himself, for he owed his trials somewhat, seeing that they were the "dead selves" and "stepping-stones" on which he rose to higher things.

After spending a few months at Mr Dawson's school, a superior drudgery in the shape of clerking awaited him—first in the office of Mr Molloy, and then in that of Mr Edward Blackmore—the latter—we are told nothing of the former—a respectable attorney, whose petty disbursements he kept account of for 13s. 6d., and afterwards 15s. per week; large enough pay for an "office-

^{*} Forster's "Life," i., p. 59.

lad in his first surtout," who lived in his father's house, and had no care but to balance his columns of Arabic symbols, and note on the retina of his mind the dress, features, and idiosyncracies of counsel, clients, clerks, attorneys, and porters who passed before him, with an army of whom his brain was soon equipped for battling for his spurs.

His chief associate in those days was Potter, a fellowclerk, to whom he was drawn by that histrionic affinity which dawned early, and throughout his life entrapped him in spasmodic theatricals. With this young man he habitually repaired to the theatres, nay, even took parts; and from his successful acting in after-years we have no reason to suppose that he travestied the characters he personated, any more than he got tainted by the low associations of the minor stage. We should say mixing with third-rate actors at small theatres, while it was his only amusement, formed part of his great educational course. No one can regret that he went through it. Any of "youth's passions unconfined" that he had were in the way of the drama; and it was the opinion of those who knew him best, that if he had chosen the stage instead of the pen for his pursuit, he would have driven as gigantic successes as he did with his novels or his readings. His dramatic susceptivity was of the keenest and most sensitive kind. In the days of his fiercest work, when he required to have the pressure lowered and the floodgates of merriment unchained, the play was his never-failing resource. In this way he relieved the throes of the "Carol" and "Dombey" when in Italy, where the absurdities of the actors and the primitive machinery of the stage awoke both his ridicule and contempt—the latter very sharply when, in Dumas' "Kean," English actors were made to appear in red hats with steeplecrowns and wide blouses, and with belts and buckles round their waists. In Paris, he saw Madame St George, once Napoleon's mistress, act when she was eighty or ninety, and an immense size through dropsy. Though such exceptional occasions gave him quickening refreshment, it was from the "starry nights," of course, that he derived most pleasure, especially if there was anything of the nature of festival, as, for example, the birthday of Moliére in Paris, when Moliére's "Don Juan" was revived. Sometimes, too, he patronised the pirates, who put atrocious adaptations of his works before the public, and on the occasion when he found poor Oliver in this predicament, in the middle of the first scene he was constrained to hide himself on the floor, where he lay distractedly till the drop-scene fell.

It was by the merest chance that he escaped the stage. Attracted by every rocket that flared, he spent night after night in the pit, and with his retentive memory grasped innumerable parts, to which, in the leisure of his employment and in his rural excursions, he subordinated every faculty of gesture and inflection. He remembered four successive years of Matthews' "At Homes." It was always with reluctance that he let the elder Matthews slip, even for a single night. Need we wonder at the keen observance with which he studied the swaggering, sparkling, polished comedian, or that next day, in the concealment of his office or the roomy theatre of an English meadow, he should address his stool or a scare-crow for a pot-boy or a Quickly. His aptitude for the boards was just as precocious as his penetration. He could not. of course, grasp all the shadings which the great and philosophic tragedian infused into his elocution, and he would probably have been a *fierce* failure with the dagger and buskins; but his mimicry, his intuitions, and his

unbounded humour would certainly, as we have seen elsewhere remarked, have made him a prince among comedians, especially low comedians.

When he was taking notes at Doctors' Commons, dismayed at uncertainty and the prospect of obscurity, he began to think of putting his practice on the stage to profit. He had already divested himself of the staginess of the tyro, and could enter elegantly and with *aplomb* upon any part he assumed. He therefore, without much hesitation, wrote a frank letter to Bartley, manager at Covent Garden, giving an honest account of what he could do. In reply, he was asked to play anything of Matthews he chose before Bartley and Charles Kemble. But, on the day appointed, cold and inflammation kept him a prisoner; and he soon set out upon a literary career.

Dickens thus slipped up into life a hardy plant, with which soft winds and cool shade had had very little to do. Yet, however roughly the elements had battered him, they never diminished the native sweetness of his character. He was like the lily which grows pure and white out of beds of foulest deposit. And so it should always be. The seed of beauty is there; the environing abomination is powerless to sully or retard it; nay, like pain to the martyr, it breeds the greater grace, so that when the leaves and the snowy petals unfold themselves, they hide even the foulness amid which their excellences expanded.

Nor must it be forgotten that the immediate effect of his "iron fortune" was to impart prudence and sagacity to his views of life, which with his father's example—then a Parliamentary reporter for the *Morning Chronicle*—encouraged his bent towards a strictly literary profession at the age of eighteen. He had had no patience with

the red tape and soullessness of the law from the day he entered Molloy's office; he feared an incrustation of slots and emery powder, which would have been as intolerable as Lamert's blacking—a too dreadful thraldom to live under. Accordingly, he looked for deliverance first to the stage, as that for which he was best fitted in the meantime, and secondly to the newspaper press, then a refuge for the outcasts of all professions, and a forlorn hope for those who had none; but a calling just as hard and dangerous for body, mind, and morals, as it has been ever since—requiring an iron constitution, versatility, and adaptability, and great reserve of mental and bodily power, as well as a perfectly resistent individuality, against which certain inimical forces to which the newspaper man must ever be exposed, would beat in vain.

Dickens saw in the meteoric life of the reporter a brilliant variety of experience which, even if the press held out no tempting bait to his hopes, would have hopelessly fascinated him. The congeniality and promise of the thing kindled the ardour of his sanguine youth, and he set himself to master the art of shorthand, the first essential of his destined career. Notwithstanding his inherent aptness, he said he found this task as hard as the acquisition of seven languages—his difficulties being greatly enhanced by the non-existence of any system founded on a scientific basis; he had to wade through a vast wilderness of arbitrary symbols, neither more nor less than a new form of Chinese adapted to the exigencies of occidental reporting. These strict studies he varied by a course of desultory reading at the British Museum.

His greedy appetite, tenacious memory, and the singleness and importance of his aim made this period, extending over a couple of years, of the greatest benefit; he described it as the usefullest of his whole life, and the fact that he then first tasted the sweets of liberty in the pursuit of unfulfilled aspiration gave piquancy to the relish, as well as durability to his impressions. He had also, at this time, some practice in note-taking at Doctors' Commons preparatory to his *debut* in the gallery at Westminster, of the first vacancy in which he had already secured the promise; and not content with that, he equipped himself more fully for his work, by familiarising himself with the London police courts, where his maturing judgment began to reflect on the bearings of the crime, the squalor and the misery to which he had never been a stranger, and which he so graphically depicted.

Many critics object to Dickens on the ground of his irregular education, and deploring that no school or university claimed him, affect to discover blemishes in his construction and style which only an untrained mind could have overlooked. There cannot be a doubt, either that his education was irregular, inexact in its scope and ill-ordered in its method, or that absence of system and supervision produced an unsymmetrical mind and clumsy logician; for when didactic, he is invariably feeble in cast and effect. But it must be remembered that a deep and methodical education would probably have changed his destiny; or if not, it would at least have hampered him, and probably given a heavy and tawdry, instead of an airy and brilliant, touch to his compositions. An apprenticeship in a newspaper office is the best training for a journalist; breadth of education is only of advantage in the higher reaches of the profession, where an infinitude of detail has no disturbing influence on greatness of mind-for great minds grow impatient of trifles; and the mere reporter lives in a world full of the most intricate and conflicting detail, in the

arrangement and exposition of which a university man would probably be as painfully laborious as an old-fashioned weaver compared with the factory loom.

As a reporter, he was first employed on the *True Sun*, which, after a victorious strike among the reporters—in which he took the lead—he exchanged for the *Mirror of Parliament*, a newspaper originated and conducted by one of his mother's brothers. In his twenty-third year, he was appointed to the *Morning Chronicle*, where he had the advantage of serving under Mr John Black, a talented Scotchman, whose memory is still cherished among the older litterateurs as an enterprising conductor, and a warm friend to all who needed counsel or help, and who, in the case of our author, was one of the first to detect genius which but waited the opportunity to burst into bloom.

His duties on these journals were mainly of a stenographic character--rushing in and out of Parliament and recording the speeches of the public men of the day. These duties, his contemporaries affirm, were discharged with skill, courage, and fidelity, and with a certain subtle embellishment, which, while not exceeding the bounds of fair reporting, conveyed to the reader the character and tone of the speaker himself. No member of the gallery pretended to the same graphic power.

This of course was the more mechanical part of his calling, and one which could not develop the imaginative faculty any more than facility of composition, or elegance of style. Indeed, to the workman who aims at the higher departments of literature, the time spent in making good speeches out of bad, is extremely unfavourable to a pure style. Crudeness, and even the atrocities of grammar, would in time infect the purest classicist in whose ear they were continually dunned. And Dickens would certainly

have been a victim if he had started with a refined style himself, or if, amid the murderous chorus of flaw that fell upon his ear, he had not used it as so much coarse material, out of which he might spin some seemly fabric.

It is almost impossible, however, to estimate how greatly this work influenced Dickens' career. On the press he received the finishing touches of that disciplinary course through which he had passed since he read "Peregrine Pickle," "Humphrey Clinker," "Vicar of Wakefield," "Gil Blas," "Don Quixote," "Robinson Crusoe," "The Arabian Nights," "Tom Jones," and "Roderick Random" at Chatham. He declared to the journalists of New York many years afterwards-"To the wholesome training of severe newspaper work when I was a very young man I constantly refer my first successes;" and in May 1865, when presiding at the annual Newspaper Press Fund dinner, he said: "I have pursued the calling of a reporter under circumstances of which many of my brethren here can form no adequate conception. I have often transcribed for the printer from my shorthand notes important public speeches, in which the strictest accuracy was required, and a mistake in which, to a young man, would have been severely compromising, writing on the palm of my hand, by the light of a dark lantern, in a post-chaise and four, galloping through a wild country, and through the dead of the night, at the then surprising rate of fifteen miles an hour. The very last time I was at Exeter I strolled into the castle-yard there to identify, for the amusement of a friend, the spot on which I once 'took,' as we used to call it, the speech of Lord John Russell at the Devon contest, in the midst of a lively fight maintained by all the vagabonds of the division of the county, and under such a pelting rain, that I remember two good-natured colleagues, who chanced to be at leisure, held a pockethandkerchief over my note book, after the manner of a state canopy in an ecclesiastical procession. I have worn my knees by writing on them in the old back row of the old gallery of the old House of Commons; and I have worn my feet by standing to write in a preposterous pen in the old House of Lords, where we were huddled together like so many sheep-kept in waiting say, until the woolsack might want re-stuffing. Returning home from exciting political meetings in the country to the waiting press in London, I do verily believe I have been upset in almost every description of vehicle known in this country. . . . Those trivial things I mention as an assurance to you that I never have forgotten the fascination of that old pursuit. The pleasure that I used to feel in the rapidity and dexterity of its exercise has never faded out of my breast. Whatever little cunning of hand or head I took to it, or acquired in it, I have so retained as that I believe I could resume it to-morrow, very little the worse from long disuse. To this present year of my life, when I sit in this hall, or where not, hearing a dull speech, I sometimes beguile the tedium of the moment by following the speaker in the old, old way; and sometimes, if you can believe me, I even find my hand going on the table-cloth, taking an imaginary note of it also."

We would not dwell upon these early parts of his history, if it were not important to trace the power and distinction of such a man to their true sources. It is clear that with such unlimited scope for observation—despatched to every corner of the country on the most exciting public occasions—occasions the most calculated to bring out the talent and culture and idiosyncracies of the people—he would have been preposterously improvident if he had not laid by in his literary *repertoire* the very

character and incident which the earnest of his budding powers must have desiderated. The rapacious spirit of the journalist was ever on the outlook for enriching material to line his brain with, or use in the shape of a special sketch.

For a character-sketcher this occupation was invaluable. No other education could come within sight of it for seeing the many-sidedness of human nature; and as Dickens was from his third or fourth year as good a mimic as Kean or Macready, one can readily understand the rare facility with which he penned the bizarrerie and burlesque of his droll puppets, as well as the fine traits of beauty and benevolence with which he clothed his more reasonable creatures. Besides, constantly seeing and hearing public men, the natural volition was to form numberless comparisons, of which his predatory mind took full advantage for his growing designs. Not only so, but scanning and searching and weighing in this way, evolved a rare discrimination in character, and rendered the choice of pure worth from the chaotic elements surrounding it, a task of tolerable ease. a frequent tribute to his industry and analytic skill that at this early time he was singularly keen to detect those tortuosities of dialect which he subsequently photographed with matchless fidelity.

Almost the first original thing to which talented young pressmen betake themselves is the Newspaper Sketch—sparkling descriptions of out of the way corners or striking events—watering-places and picturesque scenery, English hamlet-life, holiday tours, &c., a department of ephemeral literature established with the daily newspaper. This was exactly in the line of Dickens' desire, but he was not as yet so well acquainted with provincial life as with the every-day existence of Londoners; so in January 1834

he dropped "Mrs Joseph Porter, over the way," the first of the sketches by Boz (a name taken from "Boses" the nasal pronunciation of "Moses," the nickname of a younger brother), "into a dark letter-box, in a dark office, up a dark court in Fleet Street," hardly expecting, we dare say, to see it blazoned in print. What was his joy on finding his fears falsified? He "walked down to Westminster Hall, and turned into it for half an hour, because my eyes were so dimmed with joy and pride that they could not bear the street, and were not fit to be seen there." Nine sketches appeared in the same magazine, The Old Monthly, owned and edited by one of Bolivar's retired South American captains. health of the magazine and its owner failing at the same time, Dickens was put to find a new outlet for his wares, and this he did, through the courtesy and discernment of Mr Black, in the Evening Chronicle, where the remainder of these fugitive pieces appeared—the salary of the author being on that account raised from five to seven guineas a week.

The appreciation he thus secured in his office was but an echo of the feeling outside. Boz got the town by the ear, and he published his first series in book form in the beginning of 1836, and the second in December of that year. Meantime his "fame was scattered" about, and the pretty young author, who had a good figure—dressed with true Cockney jauntiness—big searching grey eyes, good sharp features, and abundant hair and a swinging gait, became more famous as Boz than he had been as an accomplished stenographer. "I began to tread this life when very young," he said, "without money, without influence, without companions, introducer, or adviser. I met with no dragons in the path." But, as Cecil said of Sir Walter Raleigh, he could

toil terribly. "Peu de moyens, beaucoup d'effet," that was his portion at first in this world of work; and as soon as the young frame could stand it he was set to his appointed task. And he laboured at it with his own might like all other men who are their own star: and to "the persevering mortal the immortals as swift."

The criticism which Boz called forth was not unanimously favourable; but Dickens kept his own course amid the tediousness of criticism, and had the satisfaction of hearing from Mr Macrone, his publisher, that the work was commercially successful. The vivid glimpses of city life in the "Sketches" were warmly welcomed in America, where each instalment was lifted bodily into the columns of the daily press on its arrival.

Mr George Hogarth, who had been a lawyer in Edinburgh, and as such was known to Sir Walter Scott, for whom he is said to have done some matters of business, had some ability as a musical writer, and had charge of the arrangements connected with the *Evening Chronicle* when Dickens agreed to contribute the remaining sketches to that offshoot of the morning paper. It was then that his acquaintance with the family of Mr Hogarth began, an acquaintance resulting in his marriage with Miss Hogarth on the 2d of April 1836, just about the time when the immortal Pickwick sprang into being.

The origin of this remarkable man, whose name was taken from a coach proprietor at Bath, is best described by the novelist himself:—"I was a young man of two or three-and-twenty, when Messrs Chapman and Hall, attracted by some pieces I was at that time writing in the Morning Chronicle newspaper, or had first written in the Old Monthly Magazine, waited upon me to propose a something that should be published in shilling numbers,

a vehicle for certain plates to be executed by Mr Seymour; and there was a notion, either on the part of that admirable humorous artist, or of my visitor, that a Nimrod Club, the members of which were to go out shooting, fishing, and so forth, and getting themselves into difficulties through their want of dexterity, would be the best means of introducing these. I objected on consideration that although born and partly bred in the country, I was no great sportsman except in regard of all kinds of locomotion; that the idea was not novel, and had been already much used; that it would be infinitely better for the plates to arise naturally out of the text; and that I would like to take my own way, with a free range of English scenes and people, and was afraid I should ultimately do so, in any case, whatever course I might prescribe to myself at starting, My views being deferred to, I thought of Mr Pickwick, and wrote the first number, from the proof sheet of which Mr Seymour made his drawing of the club, and his happy portrait of its founderthe latter on Mr Edward Chapman's description of the dress and bearing of a real personage whom he had often seen. I connected Mr Pickwick with a club, because of the original suggestion, and I put in Mr Winkle expressly for the use of Mr Seymour. Mr Seymour's sudden and lamented death before the second number was published—[he committed suicide in a fit of derangement]-brought about a quick decision upon a point already in agitation; the number became one of thirtytwo pages, with only two illustrations, and remained so to the end "

The success of Pickwick was tremendous. Of the first part the binder was ordered to prepare 400 copies, but as one part, succeeded another, the work attracted thousands of admirers of every class of society. The publishers are said to have made £20,000 by it, and could therefore well afford to give this young dandy by whom they were on the way to colossal fortune the silver toddy-ladles which they added to his price. The work was translated into almost every tongue, and became a universal favourite of the remotest speakers of the English tongue. Sometime afterwards in the Sierra Nevada, a party of travellers came upon a hut half buried in the snow, out of which a being emerged who spent his life amid the desolation of that perpetual winter scene—supporting himself on bears and elks, and who, in reply to an enquiry how he contrived to pass his life in such absolute isolation, went and brought out "Pickwick" and "Nicholas Nickleby," professing himself very fond of Sam Weller.

We must consider before proceeding further what were the causes contributing to this sudden success and wide fame? The critics of the day emitted a not too certain sound. In regard to "Pickwick," which in scope and scheme stands alone among its author's works, some were bold to say with Mr Croker, a very opinionated writer, that Dickens had gone up like a rocket and would come down like the stick. And, indeed, there is nothing very original in the idea of a simple retired city man setting out as the personal conductor of a set of young fools, the extravagance of whose exploits is inconsistent with true conception of character. Pickwick himself goes through life in every respect like a football. except in rapidity. He is kicked about in divers unceremonious ways, but the mischances which buffet him, and to which he frequently exposes himself, never impinge on his physical rotundity; and as long as that is intact, his equanimity, and blandness, and credulity, and candour, and innocence, are as certain as his delightful mistakes. It

is a fatuous fortune which at one time makes him the sport of most designing cheats, and immediately proceeds to rescue him from their impending snares; he goes blundering on in a sort of unsophisticated philanthropic intoxication, over the submerged intanglements of which a providential buoyancy floats him in the same way as the beneficent managers of mortal concerns establish the stumbling ways of drunk men and little children. At the same time, he must be a weak man who can fancy Pickwick within the sphere of anything but pantomimic existence. The virgin innocence even of such greenhorn natures, however plastic God may have made it, could never survive the corrosion and corruption of city life, a few years of which in the general case are found sufficient to rust off the green beauty of the most primitive innocuousness. Indeed, the pure "Pickwick" character, surrounded by metropolitan contentions would speedily lapse into mere zoophytish nonentity; certainly he could not make a fortune, or retire with the maturity of grey hairs to the pleasant dignities of a club chairmanship.

Nevertheless there was something in the unselfishness and stupidity of this man, in the astounding vagaries of his companions,—of Winkle, Snodgrass, and Jingle,—and the altogether incomparable cleverness of the Wellers which held the public spell-bound; and, disregarding the spirit of the book which is to make fun, the end which is to ridicule, and the style which is scrappy and unsymmetrical, Dickens's admirers proceeded at once to crown him the greatest genius that ever lived. The *Spectator* declared that Sam Weller surpassed Falstaff. A recent writer has gone the length of declaring "Pickwick" and "Little Nell" are the best known characters in the world of fiction. These are very warm encomiums. No doubt, the immense humour and

grotesqueness of the Pickwickian groups warrant the greatest enthusiasm. The causer of mirth and joy is, of all sublunary things, the most popular. In estimating the comparative worth of a book, you must look not to its laughter-producing absurdities merely, but to that delightfully fragrant species of incident and healthiness of converse which irradiate the reader with smiles of simple satisfaction and content. One of the old essayists divided laughter into five kinds: the dimple, the smile, the laugh, the grin, and the horse-laugh. There are, of course, sardonic smiles and ingenuous smiles; but it will not be disputed that the art which shows the best spirit and the workmanship and dignity of talent is that which laves the soul with pure and unboisterous joy, communicating its sweetness to the countenance in unconscious and suffusing smiles. Therefore, we think it was as foolish to dub Dickens a commanding genius because he had, with the extreme of spontaneity and conversational diffuseness, produced a congeries of grotesque character, as to have thought Byron interesting because he had a club-foot, or Talleyrand pitiable because he was lame.

Adverse criticism, on the other hand, was as unreliable. One contemporary said: "The Pickwick Papers are made up of two pounds of Smollett, three ounces of Sterne, a handful of Hook, a dash of a grammatical Piers Egan—the incidents at pleasure served up with an original sauce piquante." The same writer accused Dickens of a vulgar tongue, and of chronicling small beer. Dickens, we think, was much too original for the former remarks; and as to the latter, the critics of that day being more accustomed to drawing-room upholstery and the follies of fashion, did not, we fear, understand the murmurs from the gulph of woe which Dickens was

about the first to sound. But whatever judgments were passed upon him, the fact remained that since the Waverley series no publication had been looked forward to with such keen interest. In this connection Carlyle sent Mr Forster a very illustrative anecdote. "An archdeacon, with his own venerable lips, repeated to me, the other night, a strange profane story of a solemn clergyman, who had been administering ghostly consolation to a sick person; having finished, satisfactorily as he thought, and got out of the room, he heard the sick person ejaculate, 'Well, thank God, *Pickwick* will be out in ten days any way!'"

And we may here point out with respect to "Pickwick" and all our author's works, how gratifying this public avidity was. Before Dickens came, there was a big niche vacant in the gallery of letters. By resurrecting the equipage and chivalry of the past, Scott had dispersed wild draughts of delight among all classes of his countrymen. Chill age and dreamy youth alike were fascinated by him, but it was with the stupor of the enchanter that he swathed them, and out of it they always came exhausted into violent reaction and realism. Who ever read "Guy Mannering," and "Ivanhoe," and "Redgauntlet," without longing to figure in those charming fictions? They made hodmen and mechanics, princes and peers, supremely happy, but it was only with an evanescent joy, just as if they had been on the spot looking on. It remained for Mr Pickwick, Sam Weller, Bumble, Twist, Wilkins Micawber, Dick Swiveller, and Chuzzlewit to achieve the unrivalled distinction of making men-especially working men-pleased with themselves and with each other. Where was the boots, for instance, that felt no glow of pride at his kinship with the great Samivel?

There was then, as now, plenty of cheap literature; but, excluding Edgeworth and Scott, and the inimitable products of the Johnsonian period (which, by the way, were not so very inexpensive), it was mainly of the "Tom and Jerry" kind—improbable, wild, and impure. Something was wanted to throw healthy, ruddy gleams into the abyssmal depths of the masses; and—as in the arrangements of this world it always happens—the man came to fill the niche at the time when men longed most for an occupant.

Dickens first presented himself to the world as the author of "Pickwick" in 1838. A month or two after this avowal, he removed his residence to a cottage with sweet and fragrant surroundings at Twickenham, amidst the peace and bloom of which, in the fruition of his struggles, he spent many sunny days in the sunny fellowship of Talfourd, the judge who was drawn to him by a journalistic esprit-du-corps; of Thackeray, never his rival, but always his admirer; of Douglas Jerrold; of Daniel Maclise, the odd, handsome, talented Irishman, who occasionally gave himself up with singular abandonment to the luxury of laziness; of Ainsworth, Landseer, and Stanfield; of Macready, the actor; and of Hablot K. Browne, who took up the illustrations of "Pickwick" under the name of "Phiz," after the death of Seymour.

A great deal of controversy, it may be mentioned, took place as to the share of Seymour in the origination of the "Pickwick Papers," just as there was in regard to George Cruikshank's part in connection with the "Sketches;" but the facts set forth by Dickens have been abundantly proved, and there can be no reasonable doubt that Dickens was the only author of all that appeared under the names of "Boz" and Dickens.

The following summer (1839) was passed at Petersham amid equally verdant amenities, and the companionship of the same galaxy, which revolved in a rather meteoric fashion-running, leaping, and tumbling to refresh their worn-out bodies, and vary their effervescent Besides unbending the wit and mental friskiness. strained bow in this way-just as he madly romped with his children afterwards - for like Maryatt he loved children, as any one who has read about Nell and Tim and Paul Dombey may suppose—our author entered himself a student at the Middle Temple, where, however, he "ate no dinner" for a long time; and by disputing at the Shakespeare Society with the ascending stars abovementioned, and Procter, Blanchard, Charles Knight, Cattermole, and Frank Stone, acquired some of that rhetorical display and dialectical ingenuity with which he embellished his subsequent harangues. In this same year, too, he removed his house, now enlivened by the presence of two little daughters, from Doughty Street, to a large house with a large garden in Devonshire Terrace, and later on to a summer residence on a breezy hill at Broadstairs. At those places "Old Curiosity Shop," "Master Humphrey's Clock," and "Barnaby Rudge" were composed.

With the publication of "Pickwick," Mr Dickens' fortune was secure. The publishers saw that such a writer would be the making of any house. Macrone asked £2000 for the copyright of the "Sketches" which he had bought for £150. Over and above Dickens' connection with the young firm of Chapman & Hall—a connection continued for many years—Bentley induced him to enter into an agreement to contribute a tale to his magazine; and he was thus obliged to carry on two tales—"Twist" and "Nicholas Nickleby"—at the same

time. He found such an arrangement subversive of health and tranquillity, and we cannot wonder at that, considering the marvellous detail and unflagging interest with which the stories were sustained till the very end. Besides, he was never a week in advance with his "copy." The first part of "Oliver Twist" appeared in Bentley's Miscellany in 1837, of which he was the first editor, and to which as such he contributed some fugitive piecesnone of them of any great mark—besides his well-known fiction. "Oliver" was designed to expose the secrets of the London slums—its primary purpose, Mr Forster says, to show its little hero, jostled about in a miserable crowd, preserved everywhere from the vice of its pollution by an exquisite delicacy of natural sentiment which clings to him under every disadvantage. The applause with which the effort was received showed how warmly the public sympathised with this aim, and how heartily they detested the cunning and deceit, the sensualism and crime, of which Fagin, a miscreant grown grey in intellectual depravity, the Dodger, with cunning and cruelty gilded by cleverness, and Bill Sykes, the revolting bandy-legged criminal, were the too graphically terrible types. In the face of some murmurs about the lowness of the subject, and the pertinacity with which so gifted a writer exposed Bumbledom injustice and juridical stupidity, its popularity was immense, especially among throngs of obscure readers, who were delighted that a talented exponent of their sorrows had been found—a physician who could gently probe their sorest wounds—a limner who could depict their most catholic sympathies and their worst griefs. Though sensational throughout, the scenes are never morbidly The murder-scene of poor Nancy melodramatic. who, if heaven had transplanted her into less sooty surroundings, would have blossomed into leafy luxuriance of virtue—is perhaps the most exciting passage in the whole work; but we don't know that anybody except the most captious would object to its pathos as too pathetic; certainly no one can dispute its power.

When "Oliver Twist" had run its course, Dickens gave up *Bentley* to Mr Harrison Ainsworth, the author of the not too wholesome "Jack Sheppard." Dickens nowhere manifests the least love for the instructors of youth, except in the case of the Canterbury schoolmaster. Bradley in "Our Mutual Friend," is well known as a sophistical misanthrope; even Blimber, in "Dombey," who enforced cram and asceticism for the sake of money, could never have been the victim of any youthful apotheosis; but flinty as they were, they were immaculate compared with Squeers and Crankle, the schoolmasters in "Nickleby" and "Copperfield."

It seems that when Dickens was a child sitting about the by-places near Rochester Castle with a head full of Partridge, Strap, and Sancho Panza, he had heard of the cheap schools in the Yorkshire wolds, where young people were fed and educated at £,15 and £,20 a year. interest in these cruel "seminaries," where the fare was worthless and the education a pretence, was aroused, if it had ever slumbered, by a notorious law-suit in 1837; and at Christmas of that year, he and Mr Browne went down to Yorkshire and collected some startling material for "Nickleby." The result is well known. exposure of the dominies was as complete as their system was barbarous. In the whole range of fiction there is not a more angersome tragedy than the atrocities of Squeers. The repugnance with which one reads those unparalleled cruelties is increased tenfold by the cover under which the villain hides. The coat fitted so many backs, that one of the tribe more courageous than his

fellows, and in whose case an intense squint made identity more sure, actually threatened the author with an action for libel. The great service done in this book was universally recognised; the book itself universally appreciated. Crummles, Newman Noggs, Miss Knaggs, Miss La Crevy, &c., became for the time the most renowned names in the country; and Sydney Smith, who, by the way, confessed to having held out against Dickens until conquered by "Nickleby," wrote to him to say that some ladies of his acquaintance were so enraptured with the book, that they would consider it a proud distinction if they were put into the next number, and in particular, "Dickens might marry Lady Charlotte to Newman Noggs."

Following closely on the completion of these works, Dickens published a collection of stories under the name of "Master Humphrey's Clock"-"The Clock," "The Old Curiosity Shop," and "Barnaby Rudge" being in the series. It is almost trite to say that Little Nell is the central character in "The Old Curiosity Shop," and that "Rudge" attempts, not with very conspicuous success, to depict the scenes and the days of the Gordon riots, halfa-century before. The "Memoirs of Grimaldi" also appeared about this time, but it must be confessed that, with only dry fact to draw upon, the execution of the novelist was by no means so masterly as when the illimitable resources of his imagination lay open to him. "The Old Curiosity Shop" was by far the most successful of those tales; its touching incident, the immaculate character of Nell, as pure as purity itself, and the affecting nature of her sad little fate, rivetted the most tearful attention of the reading public. Though the interest of the book—which, by the way, was written week by week —centres in Nell, she is not by any means the only personage to whom the heart of the reader is thrown open.

Dick Swiveller is a famous fellow, out of whom it was the author's aim from the first to construct something handsome. Dick is a great lump of love, for jilting whom we very strongly dislike the faithless Sophy, and whose dissipation and irregularities never balk our love of him for his innate guilelessness. Mr Garland, the single gentleman, and the Marchioness, are also unique and admirable in their way, and where is there a more masterly representation of the devil than in the character of Quilp?

We must hasten cursorily over the remaining purely literary events of his life. After a triumphant tour in America in 1842—where Little Nell, probably on account of the healthless and unnatural sentimentality about her, was immensely popular - he published "American Notes for General Circulation," in which (the Americans thought), by sarcasm, insinuation, and pungent raillery, he traduced their character and institutions. and gave them a heinously ungracious requital for their hospitality. On his second visit to America in 1867, Dickens explained away the severity of his attacks, and was received with undiminished fervour. first visit to America had been partly the result of some scheme between him and his publishers, who desired him to write a record of his travels; and in 1844. after "Martin Chuzzlewit" had charmed his admirers by a new series of splendid characters, he spent some time in Italy, and wrote his experiences in that country for the Daily News, of which he was the first editor—January 1. 1846, being the date of the initial number. Thackeray, however, he evinced no special regard for the laborious duties of an editor, and relinquished the post in a few months, resuming with greater ardour, than ever his more distinguished, more remunerative, and more

congenial task of framing fictions. These were agreeably interspersed by a series of charming Christmas Carols, which ranked as the most popular publications of their day. Between 1843 and 1848 every home was brightened at its most festive seasons by the "Christmas Carol," "The Chimes," written at Genoa, where he took up his residence in 1844, "The Cricket on the Hearth," "The Battle of Life," and "The Haunted Man, or the Ghost's Bargain," illustrated by the graphic skill of Maclise, Edwin Landseer, Stanfield, and Leech. "Dombey and Son," considered by many to be his masterpiece, came out in 1847-8, "David Copperfield," which to a great extent is biographical, in 1849-50, "Bleak House" in 1853," Little Dorrit" in 1856, and successively thereafter "Hard Times," "A Tale of Two Cities," "Great Expectations," and "The Uncommercial Traveller." In addition to this, his more important work, he started Household Words in 1850; and after a quarrel with the publishers, Messrs Bradbury & Evans, it was incorporated with All the Year Round, which during his lifetime probably enjoyed a more extensive patronage than any contemporary magazine. A notable feature was the Christmas number, usually planned by the great novelist, who always contributed a tale or two, of which the most interesting are "The Seven Poor Travellers," "Somebody's Luggage," "The Wreck of the Golden Mary," "Mrs Lirriper's Lodgings," "Tom Tiddler's Ground," "No Thoroughfare," and "The Haunted House."

It will thus be seen that in his thirty-four years of strictly literary life, his pen was far from inactive. Before proceeding to look at the quality, mode, and tendency of his work, or the versatility of his genius, it is necessary to say a word or two on his importance as an exemplar. His life was a singularly pregnant

example. He was a Titanic worker. No novelist has produced more of equal quality except, perhaps, the Frenchman Balzac, and Sir Walter Scott. He found his sweetest solace and greatest reward in unceasingly upraising tract after tract of imaginary fabrics. His toil was undertaken and accomplished without the spur of any base motive. He was wedded to work for the sake of work and benevolence, perceiving in the diligent pursuit of these two, the proper destiny of a human being. Starting in the dew of youth, and in youth tasting the sweets of success, he might have aimed at high endeayour and great achievement, as that which alone would bring the best guerdons of our brief span. But if we read his life aright, he had from the beginning a nobler aim in view than the accomplishment of some great thing, or the production of some startling effect. When he discovered his power he dedicated it to no chiaroscural surprises, but to the persistent exercise of a soothing and amusing, if not an elevating, influence. No doubt the shade which his early life threw around him had had some share in tutoring his soul to a comparatively humble view of existence, but however mild his worldly aspirations —(they never took any flight to the empyrean of fashion) —he never allowed them to disturb the sedulous continuity of his work, any more than his integrity of purpose.

What was the quality of his work? Now that distance has cooled the fervency of admiration, is it dimmed by the shadow of a doubt? There is no question about the lowness of the company he keeps. There are few high types of character in his works. His greatest characters are children, fools, or villains. We don't know that any very fresh impulses could be derived from Sam Weller, Pickwick, Fagin, Squeers, Gamp, Jonas Chuzzlewit, Pecksniff, Dombey, &c.; even the immortal Micawber

and the inimitable Swiveller are feeble moralists, though the humour and life and variety pervading these and other characters are as unbounded as unique. Yet he lends no charms, but the utmost horror, to every species of vice. As he wrote chiefly for the millionalbeit that his drollery is as irresistible to the peer as to the peasant—he probably took the most effectual way to teach them; but it was the only way possible to him. It was in the fulness of his everyday life, and the ultratenderness of his favourite episodes-for instance, the trials and death of Paul Dombey, Little Nell, Tim, and Dora, amongst which dear children there is a palpable family likeness — that he was most lovable and instructive. Of course there is wide diversity in the talent displayed. That is inevitable in the case of every writer; but whether the palm must be accorded to "Pickwick," or "Dombey," or "Chuzzlewit," or any one of those which flowed from fancy in the great plethoric period between his twenty-fourth and fortieth year, we venture to say that Dickens shares with Scott the distinction of having, in the words of Jeffrey, "given more delight, and suggested better feelings to a larger class of readers than those of any other author, with the exception of Shakespeare alone." It was, besides, a delight which was perfectly harmless-nay, that was partly born of the streaming humanity and benignity which, having no rotten or sycophantish sound about it, at once thrilled a reciprocating audience, and made Dickens the personal friend of the English people for a quarter of a century. It was a bewildering popularity that greeted him-dangerous to a feebler mind or softer will; and though his performance did not change the current of that sort of literature—for with Scott and Mrs Trollope that vast vortex for fiction had begun to whirl which has widened ever since—yet he did literature a grand service in putting it into a thoroughly realistic vein, and, in regard to the eighteenth-century stiffness which marred the effect of prior novels, in completing the divestiture which Scott had begun. His burlesque we think more unique than anything since the days of Cervantes—quite as entertaining and infinitely more real; and we suspect even Pickwick's sputterings of morality—weak as they are — and quiet cuts at conventional absurdities have been much more serviceable than the recondite sagacity which flashed from Dulcinea's lover and Sancho Panza in their most lucid intervals.

It has often been complained that Dickens exaggerated his characters. With human nature at his finger ends, he did on occasion slightly travesty eccentricity by his habit of seizing certain points and bringing them out too prominently without taking off the glare by some milder colouring. When he takes up the savage, he is not content with painting him pitch; he tatooes him with merciless elaboration of finish. Unctuous Uriah in "Copperfield," Stiggins the canting dissenter, and others already mentioned, readily occur to one as cases in point,—although the author protested that they were no more mere fanciful creations than the Cheeryble Brothers, whose charity and magnanimity were exact transcripts of what he had seen in some Manchester warehousemen. And it must be remembered that he would have been false to nature if he had dealt in very symmetrical characters, for we all know that everyday life reveals only a scarcity in the symmetry of human character. Even good characters, essentially rare, are frequently, nay invariably, marred by minor emaciations and disfigurements - pettishness, moroseness, inconsiderateness, hobbies, &c. "Every man," says Emerson, "is less perfect than a pumpkin, for every pumpkin goes through every point of pumpkin history." But every great man is great only in part. He may have a great voice, rusty enough, or sweet enough, but it is only the voice of the unit; the flood music of the choir is denied him. He will always have defects of knowledge, skill, attainment, or temper—trivial defects, it may be; but true greatness shows a purer light through the small chinks than in the big openings; the divineness of a man's light displays itself more in the trivialities than the criticalities of life. All honour to men of achievement, of scholarship and renown, who by sudden and startling leaps ascend from the low plain up to the summit of fame-who become pioneers of civilization among the tangled forests and savage tribes of unreclaimed continents—who brave death and disaster in the battle-field or in fever-stricken slums—who sacrifice property and liberty, and even life itself, to preserve purity and principle, blamelessness and consistency; -- all honour we say to these! but is there not as great vicariousness and virtue in the man who in the seclusion of domestic life plods on his weary and unhonoured way, with an unsullied name and a pure conscience, striving to anticipate the wants and comforts of his dependants, and shedding dignity and gentleness and sanctity about his home? We venture to say that the ripples of this man's influence radiate far-all the farther because the undulations are slight and gentle.

We fear the subject of our sketch failed somewhat in this respect; but that by the way. Dickens understood the greatness of trifles; he knew and showed his science in small things. And this brings us to speak of his mode. He took advantage of the most petty personal traits of a man or a woman to make up the total of oddity, or ugliness, or turpitude, or saintliness he desired to present. This is visible in all his pictures, whether

of cabins, landscapes, or children. There is only one exception. He did not in romantic affairs care to paint the lily. His sentimentality was rather pathetic than poetic. Even into his meagre attempts at the grandiose and transcendental he threw such a blending -all unconscious, it might be-of drollery, that you could not avoid the intuition—it is that rather than the perception—that he was "laughing in his sleeve." In love affairs he seemed to be gifted with satirical aptitude only. At all events, pure romance was not in his way. In his element he had a stately enough sweep, but out of it he was just as awkward, and sometimes as ridiculous, as the albatross on deck; and this is his demeanour in a courtship. Still, we think, nothing is more obvious in his works than a sense of responsibility, which he never treated lightly, although he was occasionally unscrupulous in the means he used to give his power its due effect. He never, like one of the characters in Jerrold's "Housekeeper," studied human nature to take advantage of its weakest parts. He went about in the dens and caves of the earth hunting for material; his journalistic education made him an unparalleled scrap-collector: his characters are all framed on models. The fault was, he did not confine his jackal tendencies to the great world which all may legitimately use. He invaded the domain of friendship, and fashioned his Skimpole (in "Bleak House," published in 1851), off Leigh Hunt, a man of kind and æsthetic nature, genial presence, and agreeable parts, but who, like many literary men, was extremely lax in pecuniary matters. This offence was all the more ungenerous seeing that Hunt had laid bouquets of praise ad nauseam at the feet of the traitor, declaring that some of his passages—as, for instance, the letter of Miss Squeers to Ralph Nickleby—surpassed Smollet. Another instance

of turning friends to account in this way is to be found in the Boythorn of "Bleak House," for whom the critic Landor sat on many occasions. Again, he executed so true a likeness of a metropolitan magistrate in "Twist," that a Mr Laing put on the cap and retired into premature obscurity. Such instances might be multiplied indefinitely. A writer in Notes and Queries knew Packer the law-writer in "Bleak House" quite well, and was acquainted with the neighbourhood in which he lived. In regard to the Cheeryble Brothers in "Nickleby," a firm of brothers near St Paul's imitated the mode of address made famous by that celebrated pair—"Brother, how do you do?" "Very well, brother," &c.

The slight overdraughts he made on reality can readily be pardoned for the sake of the motive and tendency which illumine each picture and pasquinade, and which were as easily seen from the first, as that his Icarian flight was not to be cut short by any cassandric vaticination of Mr Croker. His motive was as pure as his labour was innocuous: to expose the miseries of the Fleet, which through him became defunct, and the farce and formalism of ignorant magistrates—(he was at war with the whole range of authority, and ridicules the glorious fatuity of Bumbledom and beadles in the same book that he lashes the depravity of the bench)—to impart joy to the sorrowing, and hope to the despairing; and to make smiles to laugh in the eyes that woe had sunk. "You should be happy yourself," said Jeffrey, one of the first to recognise his worth; "for to be sure you have done more good, and not only fastened more kindly feelings, but prompted more positive acts of benevolence by this little publication (the Carol), than can be traced to all the pulpits and confessionals since Christmas 1842."

It was only to be expected, therefore, that he should

have acted the poor man's friend both in his writings and in his life, although he never flattered him. We think it worth while to elucidate this by some appropriate incidents. When fresh from the delirium of seeing Venice for the first time, his exclamation to his friend was "Ah! when I saw those palaces, how I thought that to leave one's hand upon the time, lastingly upon the time, with one tender touch for the mass of toiling people that nothing could obliterate, would be to lift oneself above the dust of all Doges in their graves, and stand upon a giant's staircase that Sampson couldn't overthrow."* When in the midst of the palaces of Genoa, he said to himself, "I must strike a blow for the poor;"—the idea of "The Chimes," which he then wrote, and the hero of which is a London porter, being suggested to him while there by a peal at midnight. By his exertions at a coroner's inquest, a poor creature was indicted only for concealment of birth and not child murder, and "the poor desolate creature," he said in his minor writings, "dropped upon her knees before us with protestations that we were right (protestations among the most affecting that I have ever heard in my life), and was carried away insensible." He afterwards retained counsel for her. In subscribing for two copies of a book by a workman, he wrote to his biographer: † "I have been much affected by the little biography at the beginning, and I thought you would like to share the emotion it had raised in me. I wish we were all in Eden again—for the sake of these toiling creatures." These incidents are culled at random from a host of others equally expressive and equally trivial, to show how deeply fixed at the roots of his being was the everlasting principle of charity. And we are tempted

^{*} Forster's Life of Dickens, vol. ii. p. 122.

[†] Forster's Life of Dickens, v. i. p. 255.

here to inquire how a man of such unmistakeable softness could ever have been guilty of the domestic flintiness into which it is alleged his temper betrayed him?

It naturally followed from the sympathies just indicated, that his opinions should have inclined to Radicalism, and his prepossessions been if anything against the assumptions of the aristocracy. But partisanship was about the last necessity of his existence; he patiently strove to bring the classes nearer each other; he probably did the least of any writer to stir up class prejudices and antipathies. None the less had he a low opinion of the vacuity and fatuity of "society." His fame would have ranked him high among the "lions" of a capital which makes lionising a chief fashionable diversion: his brilliant conversational powers, his polish, and full flow of spirits fitted him to shine in such circles; yet he recoiled from the hollowness and mockery, despising its stultifying influence on those more catholic sympathies of which he was the accepted apostle. "I never go into what is called 'society,'" he said in 1844, "that I am not aweary of it, despise it, hate it, and reject it. The more I see of its extraordinary conceit and stupendous ignorance of what is passing out of doors, the more certain I am that it is approaching the period when, being incapable of reforming itself, it will have to submit to be reformed by others off the face of the earth."* It was a wise remark of a contemporary that he was not for the cloud-capped towers and gorgeous palaces; and in regard to Reform, he had the very communistic rule in view, that "one of the most important conditions for the establishment of a healthy system of social economy would be the restraint of the properties and incomes of the upper classes beyond fixed limits."

^{*} Forster's Life of Dickens, v. ii. p. 80.

Coming to the subject of his versatility, the first thing to be noticed is the comparison sometimes made between Dickens and contemporary genius in the matter of versatility—a favourable comparison in the case of Thackeray, and an unfavourable in the case of Lytton. As every genius must stand "on his own legs," such comparisons we think extremely unsatisfactory. Because some geniuses are spherically complete, it would be absurd to say that all others must have a complete circle It cannot, we think, be disputed that Dickens was versatile in the highest degree: a humorist, a satirist, a story-teller, an actor, a reader, and an orator and discreet speechifier, he only wanted Melpomene to inspire him in dramaturgy, and he would have far surpassed Lord Lytton in range of power. He was a horse big enough to pull any chaise, as Thackeray said of a very different man. And seeing that it forms such a notable trait, we shall here point out how the theatrical proclivities, evinced in early youth, developed into an amateurish mania in middle age. A thread of the manager and player running through his whole life, his zest and capacity were instinct with contagion. Every member of his troupes (except Maclise and Stanfeld-the latter rehearsing Downright twice, and then turning tail) were inspired with irresistible enthusiasm; and where timidity and lukewarmness would have compelled censure and defeat, he, by his infectious courage and emulative acting, forced success. The manager lay in him as much as the comedian; and we suspect that had he risen in theatricals to lesseeship, his practical qualities, which always concerted with his mental designs, would have staved off the difficulties which so often swamp rash and plausible managements. He could measure resources, forecast possibilities, perceive oddity or gravity in his mimes, and put a firm lock on the gains; and in addition to these accomplishments, he was master of an amount of coolness on trying occasions which would have done even an iron nerve considerable credit. The ground swell was always there, but the surface was ever calm. He records the following extraordinary occurrence at a reading, which illustrates this very forcibly: "An extraordinary thing occurred (at Newcastle) the second night. The room was tremendously crowded, and my gas-apparatus fell down. There was a terrible wave among the people for an instant, and God knows what a destruction of life a rush to the stairs would have caused. Fortunately, a lady in the front of the stalls ran out towards me, exactly in a place where I knew the whole hall could see her. So I addressed her laughing, and half asked, half ordered her to sit down again; and in a moment it was all over. The men in attendance positively shook the boards with their trembling when they came to put things right. I am proud to record the gas-man's sentiment as delivered afterwards was, 'The more you want of the master, the more you'll find in him.'" All which is very peculiar, for sensitive and impulsive natures, like Dickens', usually become tremulous and timid when fear or apprehension quivers. His first performance—like all its successors, in aid of a charity—was particularly brilliant. He was Captain Bobadil (in Ben Jonson's Every Man in his own Humour), to the Master Stephen of Jerrold, the Brainworm of Lemon, the Master Matthew of Leech, and the Kitely of Forster; and so completely did the spirit of the comedian engross him, that the blustering, rattling swaggerer imported himself even into the notes he penned in organising his distinguished troupe. To Mr Forster,* who desired him to see a special performance of the Gamester, he wrote: - "Man of the House. Gamester! By the foot of Pharaoh, I will not see the Gamester. Man shall not force, nor horses drag, this poor gentleman-like carcass into the presence of the Gamester. I have said it. The player Mac (Macready) hath bidden me to eat, and likewise drink with him, thyself, and short-necked Fox, to-night. An' I go not-I am a hog, and not a soldier. But an' thou goest not -Beware citizen! Look to it. Thine as thou meritest. BOBADIL (Captain). Unto Master Kitely. These." Dickens showed himself the born comedian, suiting voice and mien to every exigency with as much elegant facility as when years before he had appeared in Montreal as Alfred Highflyer in "A Roland for an Oliver," Mr Snobbington in "Past Two o'clock in the Morning," and Gallop in "Deaf as a Post." He did a similar service for the benefit of Leigh Hunt at Manchester and Liverpool, in company with the gentlemen already named, and George Cruikshank. They brought Hunt 400 guineas. But the most startling starring of these "splendid strollers," as Maclise called them, was on the occasion of the benefit of James Sheridan Knowles, whom misfortune led to sign a declaration of bankruptcy before Lord Jeffrey in 1848, just at the time when Dickens had inspected the Scott Monument, and ungraciously likened it to a Gothic spire taken off a church and stuck on the ground. Nine performances were given of "The Merry Wives of Windsor," Dickens taking Justice Shallow, followed by the farce "Love, Law, and Physic." The audiences that crowded to these performances, which were given only in the largest cities, were enormous, as may be judged from the fact that Knowles got 2500 guineas. In 1851, when Bulwer-Lytton had propounded his Guild of Literature and Art —a sort of farming-out system for decrepid "hacks," to be carried out in some cottage retreats near Knebworth, Dickens made himself manager of the little theatre at Rockingham, and repeatedly acted for the good of that well-meant but abortive scheme. Besides that, the early brightness of home life occasionally rose to the dazzle of gaiety by the constant recurrence of children's theatricals, into which, whether on the head rung of life's ladder, or on the way down again, he entered with all the zest and skill of a Mathews.

His connection with the stage was confined to acting and admiring. Relishing comedy so keenly, his taste found little piquancy in the subtleties of tragedy; and yet he was far from having a torpid conception of its beauties. It was one of his best traits that his heart opened to the mean as well as the great of all classes; but next to his big heart he always held the displosive meteors and fixed stars of the stage—the honest stock-player who lumbered in his gait, and stumbled through thickets of words as if in a bower where he had no business to be, as warmly as he who, with the eye of Mars and the voice of Jove, struck tears and anguish from enthralled beholders.

In this connection our readers must know that he occupied the public attention for twelve years as a reader, and that his audiences were always overcrowded, the enthusiasm overpowering, his coffers overflowing. He gave a series of entertainments in America in 1867, and netted £30,000 by his visit. The crush of hearers there was so vast that long strings of ticket-seekers had to be formed in the same way as at a packed railway station. Such success could not have been attained if he had not been a consummate elocutionist.

It was to be expected that such a continuous career of

success should have its corollary of honour and reward: a train of ardent admirers, a circle of warm friends, the regard of his sovereign,-Her Majesty requested an interview, and exchanged presents with him, - and the gratitude of posterity. With those former blessings Dickens was early endowed, and they were as much a consequence of his own ardent temperament and catholicity of love as of precocious renown. At the age of twenty-nine he was the guest of the literati who then adorned the Scottish capital at a great dinner, where his brown flowing locks were surrounded by the grey-headed professors of Edinburgh. Even at that age he began to speak of being threatened with dinners and demonstrations. It was the same wherever he went. He travelled a good deal in his day, staying at Genoa and Lausanne in 1844 and 1846 respectively, and from thence exploring the enchanting wonders and scenery of Italy and Switzerland; paid two visits to America, the one in 1842, and the other in 1867-68; and stayed three summers at Boulogne, and on several occasions in Paris. Wherever he took up his quarters the respect shown to him was of the most flattering kind, especially in America, where the ovations were unparalleled—the Legislative Assembly at Washington rising in the midst of their deliberations to receive him

Such displays would have been the very flower of a vain man's glory, but they were valuable to Dickens (at least he so said) only as indications of the reality of his creations. The splendours even of his American progress palled upon him: he got into a "home-fever" long before the time of re-embarkation came. It was his literary friendships that gave him most delight, and he had a good many friends in his day: Lord Houghton, Lord Lytton, Lord Dudley Stuart, Tennyson, Carlyle, Kemble,

Ingoldsby, Emerson, and others mentioned in the course of our sketch. A chain of cerebral sympathy linked him with every star of the literary world. No one felt more than he the magnetism which bound that universe in one, or delighted in the jets and sparks and streams of light which danced and sputtered and flowed from it, reluming this dark world. Artists, authors, actors, a ride with Forster, a wander amongst the hawthorn blossoms or the corn-fields, a scamper over the earth when in the gripe of frost, or robed in greenery, russet, or snow; or administering the affairs of a strolling company; -these were the delights with which his tightly-strung soul relaxed itself. If fate had been as propitious to him in his wedded as in his public life he would have moved over a very glassy surface indeed. At the head of the cavalcade of genius, a man who never knew the tears and agony of failure, its meanness and heart-burnings, its train of ignominy and disaster, caressed by the great, looked up to by the mean: he lived amidst erubescent lights, and ought to have rolled on smoothly to the end, despite the tenebrific memories of youth. None of the spit-fires of jealousy were directed against him, except a very few insignificant pop-guns in the first stages of his success. "He that surpasses or subdues mankind must look to garner up a pretty fair share of hatred." Byron's life embodied his maxim; Dickens' refuted it. He never knocked up against his contemporaries, always excepting the slave-holders of the United Stateswhose corns were terribly torn by his irony-and the criminal upholders of rotten institutions. "Censure is a tax which man pays to the world for being eminent," said Swift. Dickens never paid the tax; the only censure ever directed against him was the criticism of critics who hesitated whether to admit him within the innermost circle, or keep him shivering outside.

Reverting briefly to his domestic history, it must be confessed that it affords few happy gleams, except the birth of seven sons and three daughters, most of whom he named after his friends, the greatest writers of the age -to wit, Charles, named after himself, Walter Landor, born in 1841; Francis Jeffrey in 1844; Sydney Smith in 1845; Henry Fielding in 1849; and Edward Bulwer-Lytton in 1852. The only one of them at all known is the first; and of the sons, Walter and Sydney are both dead. The first few years after his marriage passed happily enough. His wife was a woman of some intelligence, and could pass opinions, which he valued, on scenes he read from his manuscripts; but time does not seem to have drawn them more closely together; and some years before his death Dickens, who had succeeded in everything else he undertook, confessed that he had failed in this most vital element of human peace. Incompatibility was the skeleton in his closet, and it grew more gruesome as the years wore on. It is idle to speculate whether he went into the state of matrimony from the heat and impulse of youth, or after long and sober reflection. He laid some store by his exact practical wisdom, and probably in that he was superior to most authors. Nor was he one to plunge into the ocean of wedded possibility without retiring to some remote and tranquil inlet where he might adjust compasses before setting sail. Yet his incongruous incapability in erotic affairs in general must, we think, have given an oblique turn to any calculations he had formed on this subject; at all events his romance, so far as his wife was concerned, does not seem to have extended much beyond the honeymoon. He never speaks of her with fondness; there was no ethereal mixing of souls, such as we find in the biographies of other equally gifted and ecstatic pairs. We are left in

the dark as to the causes of the estrangement; there are only occasional murmurs of extravagant housekeeping on the one side, and nervous irritability on the other. The former was of course a risk he faced, and a burden from which, however vexatious it might be, he should not have flinched. On the other hand, it does not say a great deal for the sympathy or patience of any wife, especially an intellectual one, that she did not understand, or failing to understand, that she did not bear with, a failing which many great thinkers and writers have found inseparable from the indulgence of fanciful or philosophic thought.

Mr Forster leaves this matter almost blank, and his friendship exonerates him from any charge of mere finical delicacy; but biography being the exponent of character, ought to throw the best light possible on the inner nature of the subject, namely, that which is shed by his home life, and his deportment under petty worries and conflicts. Otherwise the light is but a rushlight at the best. Dickens was a man of strong individuality, and must have had some rare hidden experiences; of these we regret we know nothing, for as the test of great genius is breadth, so the test of real goodness is temper. Light and shade are necessary in our lives; the man Dickens would have little merit indeed if he had never had anything to overcome; without struggles and conflicts, and light and shade, his life would have been something very like a grand primeval forest, dull and monotonous, and very imposing. but without an occasional blink of the blue sky, or any little flowers springing up to lighten the way with their innocent and humble smile.

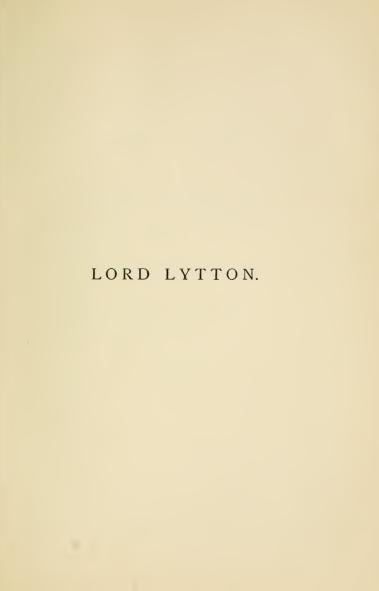
It is clear, however, that he wanted neither love nor the capacity of loving, if his otherwise copious prudence had but stood him stead at the first in supplying a proper object. There is ample reason for supposing that during his honeymoon at Chalk, he conceived a strong affection for his sister-in-law, Mary Hogarth, "whose sweetness of nature, even more than her graces of person, made her the ideal of his life." She died suddenly that same year, and her irreparable loss became the dark warp in the woof of his life. "Young, beautiful, and good, God numbered her among His angels at the early age of seventeen"-this was the epitaph he wrote for her tomb in Kensal Green. The wound was never wholly closed, and we rather think filled the intervals of his plodding life full of restlessness; but this disquietude in Dickens, now regarded as one of his chief characteristics, which made him cast about with the feelers of his soul for some strong thing to lean upon in a dreaded decrepitude of mind, was also, we apprehend, a consequence of the growing skeleton-his own "caprices and difficulties of disposition," and his wife's inability to understand him. It is unnecessary in this brief epitome to say more than that they separated in 1858, he allowing her £,600 a year, the oldest son going with the mother, and the other children with the father; and that the novelist published a vindication of himself in the Times.

The years now became fraught with toil. The fatigue he underwent on his reading tours was sufficient to break down even his iron frame, fortified as it was by his habits of walking and riding. He persisted in ceaseless toil and unending anxiety until it was too late to apply the numerous warnings he had received. He had been affected with lameness in the beginning of 1865, but thought little of it. The wearing excitement which his readings brought on may be imagined when we mention that his pulse went up to 110 and 120, and as high as 124. It was at 108 on the occasion of the last reading in February 1870, when he took a very touching

and prophetic farewell of his audience. "In but two short weeks from this time," he said, "I hope that you may enter, in your own homes, on a new series of readings at which my assistance will be indispensable; but from these garish lights I vanish now for evermore, with a heartfelt, grateful, respectful, affectionate farewell." He referred to the opening chapters of "Edwin Drood," his last work, a few numbers of which he had completed when death suddenly numbered him among the immortals. He died on Thursday, June 9th, 1870, in his fifty-ninth year, of effusion on the brain. He had been working all the morning of Wednesday, and sat down to dinner with Miss Hogarth, who became alarmed at an unusual appearance in his face. He refused to have medical assistance, but he soon lapsed into a state of unconsciousness, from which he never recovered except to murmur incoherent phrases. His last words were "on the ground."

It would be vain to describe the universal mourning amidst which he was buried. A man so widely known, and known only as a benefactor, could not but die regretted, and mingled regret and grief was the tone in which the whole world spoke of his decease. His will (by which, it may be mentioned, he left personal estate amounting to £93,000), forbade anything but simplicity at his funeral. Accordingly, instead of masses of the living great, as in the case of Thackeray, the only spectators of his obsequies were the sculptured memorials of the distinguished dead in Westminster, and a few sad friends and sombre clergymen. Always apt to discern and ready to recognise the sympathies of the public, Dean Stanley found a place for him beside Macaulay, Johnson, Garrick, Campbell, and Handel, under the shadow of the monuments of Shakespeare, Addison, Goldsmith, and Thackeray—congenial company, surely, for so genial a genius. Naked simplicity decked the rite: there was no attempt at funeral pomp, save the lustre of the sun, whose warm June light streamed through the stained glass, and trembled in purple and gold on the grey walls as the organ sent its expostulations and beseechings up and down the tranquil aisles: fitting sepulture for a man who had abjured the forms and externals of society, and was bitterly intolerant of any show which would mock the interment of a plain mortal -who had done more with his kindliness and catholic sympathies, his consummate skill, his resolute morality, and all-pervading humour, to sow concord and content, and to lull the turbulent forces which followed the wars and tumults of the previous twenty-five years, than all the wild panaceas of democrats and splendid platitudes of statesmen-who having overcome the most trying obstacles by a singularly undaunted courage, and astonished the world by a rare fertility of genius, preferred to rest his claims to fame on the mere honesty of his performance, and who, while his life of ceaseless toil and varied anxieties might have made him an easy victim to scepticism, based his final hope of immortality on no work or worth of his, but on the redemptive merits of his Saviour *

^{*} In all essential particulars it will be seen, we have verified our facts by reference to Mr Forster's valuable Life of Dickens.





LORD LYTTON.

"Kead the Rede of this Old Roof Tree.
Here be trust fast. Opinion free.
Anightly Right-Hand. Christian knee.
Thorth in all. Tit in some.
Laughter open. Slander dumb.
Hearth where rooted Friendships grow,
Safe as Altar, even to Hoe.
And the sparks that upward go
Then the hearth-flame dies below,
Ef thy sap in them may be,
Hear no Tinter, Old Roof Tree!"

This was the legend emblazoned on the banqueting-hall of Knebworth, the ancestral home of Edward George Earle Lytton-Bulwer, who for a quarter of a century was renowned as Lytton-Bulwer the novelist, and for other twenty-five years as Bulwer-Lytton, the politician, orator, dramatist, essayist, and writer of fiction. We commence with that inscription, because it strikes the key-note of a character, in which the courtesy of a chivalric age flowered anew amid a luxuriant bloom of mental endowment—one of God's gallants, the strength and versatility of whose mind were girt by a brilliant setting of grace, gentleness, and urbanity—the indefinable courtly enamel

which distinguishes gentlemen from snobs, just as an indefinable something distinguishes genius from counterfeits and imitators.

In the development of these excellences, which in society are perhaps more puissant than a great brain or a large fortune, he was favoured by the good haps of high birth and great wealth. He was descended of a long and comparatively blameless ancestry, and although in the general case blood has no more bearing on genius than has flesh on soul, being a drag rather than a spur to it, there was in Lytton a certain inherited courtesy and proportion in carriage and converse which fashion loves to look upon, and even intellect regards as the true patent of gentility. We have thus a positive interest—which would otherwise be but sorry curiosity—in tracing the descent of this posthumous child of feudal knightliness who allied his lordly life with the career of letters.

His father (vide "Burke's Peerage"), was William Earle Bulwer, of Heydon Hall (the hall was built in the time of James I.), and Wood Dalling in Norfolk, at one time Colonel of the 106th Regiment of Infantry, and who was appointed to a Brigadier-Generalship among the volunteers when Napoleon threatened to invade East Anglia, being one of the four commanding officers to whom the defence of the country was entrusted. He was, we find, preceded by a line of honourable ancestors—men who mingled important services to the nation with the duties and hospitalities of citizenship. In 1798, when forty years of age, General Bulwer married Elizabeth Barbara, the only daughter and heiress of Richard Warburton Lytton, Esq., and the last descendant of the Lyttons of Knebworth in Hertfordshire.

The patronymic Bulwer (Bölver or Bulver) was, it seems, a war-title of the Scandinavian god Odin, of

what significance, terrific or poetic, we are not told; and it is recorded among other facts put forth to establish Bulwer's Viking lineage, in which he had a pardonable pride, that there was a Scandinavian bard of the same name; that Bulverhithe, on the north-east coast of England, took its name from a conqueror who invaded that shore; and that the lands of Wood Dalling, in Norfolk, possessed by Lord Dalling, our author's elder brother, were assigned at the time of the Norman Conquest by Aylmer de Valence to Turold Bulver, one of the knights who came over in the train of the great warrior.*

But the Bulwers, with all the mighty import of their Norse name—and the last-mentioned circumstance inclines to the heroic rather than the bardic-were by no means of so conspicuous descent as the Lyttons of Knebworth. Lord Lytton's mother being the last bloodrepresentative of her family, and of the Norreys-Robinson-Lyttons of Monacdhu in Anglesea, and Guersylt in Denbighshire, was descended from Henry II., and from Anne, sister of Owen Tudor, grand-aunt of King Henry VII. She was also, the heraldries say, descended from Caradoc Vreichvras and Roderic Mawr, princes among the ancient Britons, besides claiming lineage with the illustrious families of Grosvenor, Stanley, and Warwick. Lord Lytton had thus in his veins strains of the bluest blood—the blood of three royal races, the Vikings, the Normans, and the Celts; so that on the score of mere blood, he had the strongest incitements to valour and virtue. The Lyttons had furnished some notable examples of prowess in the days when might was the chief mark of virtue. Sir Giles de Lytton was a renowned crusader under Richard Cœur-de-Lion; another * Bloomfield's "History of Norfolk."

fought at Bosworth in behalf of Henry VII., and received a great many honours for his valour and fidelity; a third, Sir Robert, distinguished himself on the Field of the Cloth of Gold, and was made Governor of Boulogne Castle by Henry VIII.; a fourth was Captain of Queen Elizabeth's body-guard of gentlemen pensioners, none of whom had less than f_{4000} a year of an income; a sixth was successively a member of the Long Parliament, a Commissioner sent to treat with Charles I. at Oxford, and a prisoner of Cromwell's in Hell-Hole. There are other Lyttons mentioned in English history, who will be found to have done their lineage no disgrace in field or in hall. Nay more, when Stuart strife and civil turmoil gave place to Hanoverian harmony, some of them became renowned in the nobler distinctions of learning and the accomplishments of peace; as, for instance, Richard Warburton Lytton, the intimate friend of Sir William Jones, and a favourite pupil of Dr Parr, who considered him next to Dr Porson and himself in scholarship.

Mrs Bulwer bore the General three sons, William Earle Lytton Bulwer, born 28th April 1800; Henry Lytton Earle Bulwer in 1804; and Edward George Earle Lytton Bulwer on 25th May 1805. William succeeded to the paternal estates; and Henry became a diplomatist, and was called to the House of Lords some time before his death in 1872. General Bulwer dying in 1807, his lady resumed, by royal licence, her father's name, and returned to Knebworth. This property, originally a fort, was purchased from Sir John Hotoft, Henry IV.'s treasurer, by the Lytton who fought at Bosworth, after he had been made keeper of the Great Wardrobe, and Treasurer of the Household to Henry VII.; and it has remained in the family ever since. At this delightful seat, full of

the beauty of the sleepy English meadow-land, Mrs Bulwer undertook the education of her sons.

Like Scott's mother, this wealthy lady was endowed with an elegant taste for polite literature—inherited very probably from her erudite father-and made it one of the purposes of her bereaved life to imbue her children with that love of letters and scholarly accomplishment which had beguiled her own leisure. And in this aim she was more successful than such teachers usually are, for, irrespective of Lord Lytton, her second son, Lord Dalling, besides rising to eminence in diplomacy, made several contributions to literature, quite ephemeral it is true, but more than sufficient to establish his fame as a titled dabbler. Among other things he wrote the foreign review for The Monthly Chronicle, started by his younger brother, as we shall see. To the spirit, and taste, and grace of his mother, Lord Lytton confessed himself under the greatest obligations, specially in his dedication to her of the first uniform edition of his works (1840), when he was thirty-five years of age, where he says-" From your graceful and accomplished taste I early learned that affection for literature which has exercised so large an influence over the pursuits of my life; and you, who were my first guide, were my earliest critic." In this passage he evidently refers to some imitations of the ballads in "Percy's Reliques" (vide Scott, ante, p. 18), which he had penned at the early age of six. "Do you remember," he continues, "the summer days, which seemed to me so short, when you repeated to me those old ballads with which Percy revived the decaying spirit of our national muse; or the smooth couplets of Pope; or those gentle and polished verses with the composition of which you had beguiled your own earlier leisure?" From which it appears that he had a good exemplar, as well as counsellor and critic, in his lady-mother, who not only beguiled her intervals of ease in desultory reading, but embellished them with random touches of auroral poesy. Without doubt she was the fount at which he drank of inspiration; the altar at whose fires his ambition kindled; the sanctuary round which all courtliness, and purity, and sunny influences radiated. In the bright halo of these maternal excellences the young soul was caught by a kindred energy which called its latent powers into sleepless activity and urged it on its ascension. His love of Knebworth, and his manly and tender devotion to his mother, always adorned the life of this true worker. In the rarely-recurring holidays of his brilliant career, he loved to retire amid the scenes of his childhood, to have his mind relaxed by leaping into the pleasure-grounds of memory; and if his own description of Knebworth in the New Monthly Magazine (subsequently included among his essays in "The Student," published in 1835) is as reliable as it is reverent and affectionate, there can be no surprise that he should thus love to reinforce his powers: "Amidst the active labours in which from my earliest youth I have been plunged, one of the greatest luxuries I know is to return, for short intervals, to the place in which the happiest days of my childhood glided away. It is an old memorial seat that belongs to my mother, the heiress of its former lords. The house, formerly of vast extent, built round a quadrangle, at different periods, from the date of the second crusade to that of the reign of Queen Elizabeth, was in so ruinous a condition when she came to its possession, that three sides of it were obliged to be pulled down; the fourth, yet remaining and much embellished in its architecture, is in itself one of the largest houses in the country, and still contains the old oak hall, with its lofty ceiling and raised music-gallery. The place has something of the character of Penshurst its venerable avenues, which slope from the house down the declivity of the park, giving views of the opposite hills, crowded with cottages and spires, impart to the scene that peculiarly English, half-stately and wholly-cultivated character which the poets of Elizabeth's day so much loved to linger upon. As is often the case with similar residences, the church stands in the park, at a bowshot from the house, and formerly the walls of the outer court nearly reached the green sanctuary that surrounds the sacred edifice. The church itself, dedicated anciently to St Mary, is worn and grey, in the simplest architecture of the ecclesiastical Gothic; and standing on the brow of a hill, its single tower at a distance blends with the turrets of the house, so that the two seem one pile. Beyond to the right, half way down the hill, and neighboured by a dell, girded with trees, is an octagon building of the beautiful Grecian form, erected by the present owner; it is the mausoleum of the family. Fenced from the deer, is a small surrounding space sown with flowers, those fairest children of the earth, which the custom of all ages has dedicated to the dead. . . . The building stands out alone in the venerable landscape, with its immemorial hills and trees, the prototype of the Thought of Death—a thing that, dating with the living generation, admonishes them of their recent lease, and its hastening end. For with all our boasted antiquity of race, we ourselves are the ephemera of the soil, and bear the truest relation, as far as our mortality is concerned, with that which is least old."

It may thus be assumed that of the writers whose

lives we have here etched, Lytton was most fortunate at first. He had leading strings to guide him, fortune itself took him by the hand, and there was a band of friendly conspirators, in the shape of happy circumstances, pushing him behind. Not that circumstance, however propitious, would ever of itself impel a man to glory if the divine substance is not in him to begin with; occasionally, indeed, where the individual has not the primary virtue of being able to stand upon his own legs, adversity might be by far the best nurse for him; but it is clear, we think, that in the case of Lord Lytton, whose mind was so traditional and dependent, not to say one of languor and stupor, it was better that providence endowed him with the go-cart of "high birth and easy fortune." For there was a striking analogy between his health and his genius. His body, though never absolutely fragile, was never strong, and any such fate as was at the moulding of Dickens, would probably soon have extinguished his high-born kinsman. His genius was of the same soft creole kind. Its strength would easily have been crushed and its buds blasted by a breath of frost. He was of the tropical species. He required a hot-house for his languishing beauty; and in Knebworth, with its luxuries, its lofty halls, its delightful associations, and somnolent scenery, he had the proper conservatory, just as in his mother he had the most skilled attendant. After tuition at one or two academies, Edward was sent to study classics, under the charge of Dr Hooker, at Rottendean, a village near Brighton; then to Ealing to the care of the Rev. Charles Wallington, for the sake of the mathematics; and after spending a brief period with the Rev. H. Thomson, at St Lawrence, near Ramsgate. he proceeded to Trinity College, Cambridge, where he remained a term, and then removed to Trinity Hall,

where he graduated B.A. in 1826, when twenty-one years of age. He proceeded to the Master of Arts Degree in 1835; and Oxford and Cambridge afterwards conferred upon him the honorary degrees of D.C.L. and LL.D.

From the time of his first lyrics Bulwer had given unmistakeable symptoms of literary power. His precocious capacity at the age of fifteen years found some outlet in an Oriental tale, which he actually published, subjoining to his name an apology for his youth, which must have disarmed any criticism that might have been directed against it. At school, it is true, he showed no special brilliancy of parts; but (a consoling reflection to dullards, surely) the history of the four novelists brought together in this volume proves of how little account a splendid scholastic career is in the making of a great man; for the indications of genius often lie deeper than the evidence of dulness. Lytton's capacity, however, was never utterly obscured, even at school, where he preferred the romp and frolic, the sparkling eye, and cheerful voice of youth, to the solemn visage and thoughtful ways of the student. With his delicate constitution, this was much the wiser course. Humanity has lost not a few stars through their meteoric desires to make a rapid flash, and enjoy the rapture of youthful success. Slow stellar flights are the surest. The mild, patient, and moderate career is always the most fruitful; for if the genius flies in the face of physiology, and lets his blood run cold and thin, his coffin gets its first nail, and his work will probably be but a half. It matters not whether the frame is faint or strong; feebleness requires fibre, and strength tone. A youth with a cadaverous face, be it born with him, or got through tainted blood or over-study, is a monstrosity; in him, himself and posterity are wronged. We rather suspect that in their anxiety to see the population learned before healthy, and leaving out athletics from their schemes, our legislators have blinked at an hoary iniquity.

In these matters, we are glad to think, the subject of this notice was his own mentor. The single instance of academic victory that he could boast was the Chancellor's Gold Medal, which he won with a poem on Sculpture in 1825. While, however, his intellect was at this time active mainly in catering for its amusement, it must not be presumed that it was steeped in any lethargy. Bulwer-by which name he was known during his best days, just as Bacon is not known yet as Lord Verulamwas a spirited young man, a zealous and talented debater, and a fair student. Nay, more, he had the boldness and address to become a leader of his college fashions; and therefore any one who remembers the somewhat tawdry harangues on coats and vests, flaps and frills in "Pelham," will cease to wonder how a young gentleman of estate and family could have collected those dreary technicalities. This leadership among the blocks of the London schneiders did not disqualify him from a commanding position in the "Union" debating club, then effulgent with the glory of Macaulay and Austin, and adorned by the impassioned eloquence of young Villiers, who became President of the Poor Law Board; of the Right Hon. Charles Buller; of John Sterling; and of Cockburn, afterwards the Lord Chief-Justice. On the rare occasions when he did speak, Bulwer discovered such an amazing wealth of words, and wit, and wisdom, and confidence too, that he was elected president; and for a spirited vindication of monarchy and aristocracy obtained the offer of a seat in Parliament on his attaining majority—an offer he had the prudence to decline.

fact that, in conjunction with the Earl of Lovelace, he founded the Old Book Club, showed that his infantine partiality for Percy was bearing fruit.

Having finished his college career, Bulwer went abroad for a time, and almost at once commenced that round half-century's labour which added 200 volumes to our literature. When in Paris in 1826 he published privately, "Weeds and Wild Flowers," to which he appended some pedantic maxims, after the manner, it was said, of Rochefoucauld. But this work, like "Falkland" and "O'Neill, or the Rebel" (1827), he expunged from the list of his works, as too immature to appear even alongside of "Pelham." The fact is, they were the hottest fruit of that warm and high-flown sentiment so incident to the poetic period of self-conscious youths, before years have brought the "philosophic mind," when even talented men like Bulwer have little reason for their performances. They brought him no renown, but Mr Colburn the publisher discerned in "Falkland" promise sufficient to make him offer £,500 for a novel in three volumes by the same author.

In the meantime, and after the publication of those raw tales, Bulwer was married to Rosina, daughter of Francis Massy Wheeler, Esq. of Lizard Connell, Limerick, a grandson of the first Lord Massy of Duntryleague, by whom he had a son and daughter—the former, born 8th Nov. 1831, now Viceroy of India. On his return from abroad he had entered the dragoons as a cornet, but his mind being too clearly given over to literary pursuits, he relinquished his regiment in a year, and thenceforth became known to the world as an author. We are unfortunately without the immediate causes of his turning to fiction as the exponent of his philosophy. But it is clear that he started on life with very distinct views indeed, and from an early period

had a laudable longing to clothe them with befitting expression. We are not even informed what were his favourite books. Although in the general case these are important indications of the bent of one's mind, we don't find that they could have greatly influenced—certainly they would not have fructified—Bulwer's, which, before books could have done much to sway him in any way, was full of fancies about a career of letters. He was inflicted with, or possessed by, several well-defined theories, which became irrepressible with his increasing thoughtfulness; and the freedom of the novel, with its unbounded scope for excursions into all manner of heaths and woods and pastures—wherever a rambling imagination delights to roam—no doubt urged itself upon his unsymmetrical mind, as soon as his tastes developed into intentions.

One of his most marked and obtrusive beliefs, as disclosed in his writings, was his faith in the favour of fortune to those who command her. In all his first novels you find success the theme. It is not the ordinary kind of success that he preaches-success as the reward of toil and merit. This kind follows as inevitably as the operation of natural law. The success that became the thread of his many discourses was the success which a man of power can command. Pelham, essentially a selfish and impudent man, who makes the lower qualities of his mind tools with which he subjugates hostile forces; Philip Morton, who, after a somewhat vicious youth, becomes the recipient of numberless honours; Maltravers, who becomes the famous man he dreamt of for years; and Linden, one of the characters in the "Disowned,"—all attest the pertinacity and courage with which the author worked out this pet theory. Indeed, the whole charm of "Pelham" lies in the constant flow

of triumph and success. It was one of his maxims in constructing his tales of society to bound his heroes by no limitation—to turn into gold whatever they touched, after the manner of the old enchanters. He supplies the reader with an intoxication of success—we mean the young reader, for only a young reader could be bothered with "Pelham," "Godolphin," or "Maltravers," illumined here and there though they are with passages of real "His diplomatist must subdue all opposition; his author must fill the world with his renown; his adventurer must conquer fame and fortune; his very dreamer must attract to himself the universal attention, wonder, curiosity, and admiring envy of the world." These, it cannot be concealed, were false principles to start with, yet the author believed, quite as much as he made every aspiring and impassioned youth confide in, the magnificence, and luck, and invincibility of his unreal pets. And not only was his theory fallacious, but it was far from healthful: for if clever rogues, or men of forwardness, conceit, dandyism, and so forth, with only a spice of the finer qualities, are to gain the ends their selfish natures crave, where is there hope for the virtuous and persevering? Be this as it may, success was what Bulwer above all things believed in, and what exalted his young readers with the wildest hallucinations. He had other conspicuous views—they might be called hobbies of the fancy—which will be noticed at the proper time.

Meanwhile, let the reader bear in mind the four great divisions of our author's tales, namely, the social, criminal, historical, and magical romances—the order in which they appeared, though he both began and ended with the first, the social romances, the history of which we shall now recount.

The initial magnum opus of an author is always

suffused with popular interest, even if, as in Bulwer's case, it is mediocre, or brilliant like "Pickwick" or "Waverley." When Mr Colburn told Bulwer he wanted a threevolume novel for £,500, Bulwer replied, "I will give you one that will be sure to succeed." The first volume of "Pelham" had been laboured-off in Paris, and for a young writer, exercising fastidious care with each sentence, as Bulwer evidently did, he was not long in completing the work; but Colburn's reader pronounced unfavourably on the MS., which was near to being rejected, when the publisher himself revised it, and detected in it the promise of a popular fiction. It was accordingly published in 1828. The reception was not very encouraging at first; but an anonymous writer, whose characters were intended to illustrate the subtleties of a slightly-youthful philosophy, could not expect his book to appeal instantaneously to the mass of readers. It was some time before even the Examiner pointed out the beauties of the book, and a year had elapsed ere it came to be regarded as a notable event in the literary world.

For a lad of twenty-one it was a marvellous book. A great authority pronounced it to be the best sustained novel for such a youth in the whole language, not excepting "Vivian Grey," the first work of a kindred mind—Lord Beaconsfield. "Pelham," it was said by a hostile critic, "is a complete gentleman, who, according to Sir Fopling, ought to dress well, dance well, fence well, have a genius for love-letters, and an agreeable voice for a chamber." But under that frivolous and superficial exterior it was the object of the author to reveal a firm grounding—a mind capable of the most important affairs—"an ambition the most extensive in its object, and a resolution the most daring in the accomplishment of its means." With this end in view he traced the history of his hero through

numerous changes and developments, showing his tone and deportment in each new relationship-how he comported himself in prosperity, and how he met defeat. The great attraction of the book, it need not be concealed, was the astounding and utterly improbable success of this dandy-hero, whom he made irresistible in whatever sphere he chose to enter. After an interval of over forty years a talented writer observed: "The consummate skill with which so young a writer managed . . . to make us perfectly aware of the illimitable powers of management, flattery, and even polite lying, so gaily exercised by his hero, and yet to retain our respect for his real virtue, is one of the greatest triumphs ever won in literature. We do not remember any other leading character in fiction so entirely artificial and yet so true. Pelham's faithlessness, his astounding fibs, his self-adaptation to every sort of man—not to say woman; his perfect toleration of any code of morals, or rather no morals; his clear realization that politics are a craft to live by, and the world in general an oyster to be opened,—which in almost any other hands would disgust and repel the reader, are here so skilfully interwoven with the real honour of the man, his disinterestedness, his readiness to serve and help, his power of just reflection and courageous action, that all our moralities are silenced on our lips."

This is very high praise—higher we rather think than the subject warranted. What pushed the book into favour was the "hot-bloodedness" of the style, and the extraordinary persistency with which fortune seemed to cling to thoroughly questionable persons. The effect on youth was rather of an electric kind. It sent them into great yearnings and spasmodic efforts. It made Bulwer a writer for young men. Are there not grey heads now who can recall the influences amid which

he enwrapped them when but beardless chins—when inquietudes and transports, and longings for which even poetry seemed a barren speech, made the evenings purple and the nights blue and stellar with delirious fancies—peopling the brain with myriad tremulous hopes, for which there was no solace but in the woods, the song of boughs and birds, or the love-lit glances of the moon? What youth going through that rhapsodical period did not adore the exuberance, and enthusiasm, and grandeur, and passion of Bulwer's books?

It was this air of youthfulness which proved the great stumbling-block to many grave critics who had forgotten those red-hot sympathies, and who, besides, failed to perceive the alliance existing between the traits of his character, and the metaphysics, poetry, and philosophy of the writer. This personal bond ran through all his works. His favourite magazine took pains to point out his unique position as a writer whose works are faithful photographs of the impulsive and emotional, the mature and sage periods, through which he passed. He is often masked in his own creations; his great characters are described at the time of life at which he wrote. In this there was an obvious advantage. It enabled him to avoid the shifts and annoyances to which less ingenious though more imaginative artists subject themselves in assuming the shoes of old and young indiscriminately. And in this he displayed a certain amount of astuteness; because, fulfilling the earnest of his college days, he cut a great figure in the circles he loved to portray, and might well imagine himself the sport of the peculiar fortune that beleaguered his puppets. Welcomed in the "ethnical circles" of London and the brilliant salons of Paris, he had rare opportunities for imparting the sauce piquante of personality to his creations. Nor did he fail to copy what he saw in men and women, and their toil, and play, and folly—as everybody must do who expects to be original. Nevertheless his own nature was his chief inspirer. He never wearied photographing its phases, though his chemicals were sometimes dull, and the poise and arrangement tawdry. The following passage, descriptive of the author's study, taken from "Pelham," may be taken as illustrative of his egotism and vanity. It also shows the laboured rotundity of his style:—

"INTRODUCTION.

"Scene—A dressing-room splendidly furnished—violet-coloured curtains, chairs and ottomans of the same hue. Two full-length mirrors are placed, one on each side of a table, which supports the luxuries of the toilet. Several bottles of perfumes, arranged in a peculiar fashion, stand upon a smaller table of mother-of-pearl; opposite to them are placed the appurtenances of lavation, richly wrought in frosted silver. A wardrobe of buhl is on the left, the doors of which being partly open discovers a profusion of clothes, &c.; shoes of a singularly small size monopolise the lower shelves. Fronting the wardrobe a door ajar gives a slight glimpse of a bathroom. Folding doors in the background. Enter the author, obsequiously preceded by a French valet, in a white silk jacket, and a cambric apron beautifully brodé."

In thus making capital out of his surroundings, the more far-seeing critics saw much virtue. The *Times*, for instance, which had regarded poor Thackeray with such icy coldness, said of this more favoured aspirant to renown: "The truth is, Bulwer has followed the simplest and surest road to great success by taking himself in a measure for his model. Pelham, like Bulwer, was a home-bred boy, and naturally showed the shortcomings of his home education when he went forth into the world."

Encouraged by the fame which his book gradually

gained, Bulwer was not slow again to solicit the notice of his contemporaries. His application and the unflagging use of his powers at this period must have been great, for he penned a goodly-sized novel each year. The work of merely producing that quantity was not overpowering, but the research he undertook to embellish his writing with anecdote, illustration, technicality, and in many cases archæology, must have been exacting, even if congenial. The "Disowned," in which Algernon Mordaunt, a hybridised stoic of modern views and sententious expression, and one of the author's few unfortunates, is one of the chief characters, appeared in 1829; and "Devereux," one of his completest tales, in 1830. Having in those tales shown something of the morals and motives of men of the world, he strayed in the romances of crime into a more complex department of ethics. Curiosity in the affairs of the soul and the mind seems to have been as irresistible to him as his irresistible heroes. And this curiosity was not satisfied in tracing out the consequences of crime to their proper issue, and showing the mental conflicts and perturbations of the everyday criminal. Just as in the character of Savile in "Godolphin" he invents an unconventional death-bed for an exceptional man of the world, so in those criminal romances he introduces a new set of depredators to elucidate the more knotty points in his system of morals, and to show how refined and educated men comport themselves under abnormal conditions. These depths had a strange fascination for Bulwer all his days. He first gives us rare young men, then rare men of the world, then rare men of history. In this there is a natural gradation—an ascension from youth to age. But he is not content with bringing his creatures to the bounds of life. He attempts to overleap the bourne and pierce infinity where

eternal fate awaits—as in "Zanoni" and "A Strange Story."

In 1831, appeared "Paul Clifford," the first of the criminal series. It satirises the usages of society in its dealings with crime, and ends with a maxim which well describes its aim: "The worst use to which you can put a man is to hang him." The author here attempted to controvert the received notions, if not of crime, at least of criminals and their motives. The whole race of malefactors had been regarded as the hopeless habitations of vileness in principle and practice which should for ever banish them from the pale of honest society. But crime is relative to all society—evil natural to us all; the criminal only carries out depravity beyond the limits of law and privacy, and the control of the will. "Paul Clifford" was therefore designed to throw some check upon reprobation, and "Eugene Aram" (1832)—the history of the Lynn schoolmaster—to show how an enlightened man may first descend to the brutality of murder, then grow out of that desperate state into a pure and intellectual, though remorseful and unhappy, being. The office of this and the other novels of the same class is thus set forth in a laudatory article in the Edinburgh Review: "It is impossible to look back upon the series without acknowledging the great versatility of talent and strong powers of observation and description which they display. 'Falkland,' 'Pelham,' 'The Disowned,' 'Devereux,' 'Paul Clifford,' and 'Eugene Aram,' each has a different aim, and in each it has been attained with at least more than common success. The languid indifference of polished society at the present day; the splendour of the past, bright with historic names, and softened by distance; the sombre annals of poverty and guilt; loftiness of principle contending with and rising superior to suffering; the

progress of crime in a sensitive, aspiring, unregulated mind, and the subsequent agonies of remorse;—these, with the many other successful delineations which these works contain, embodied in a style vigorous and pliable, now and then running riot a little in its prodigality, sometimes strangely incorrect, but oftener rising into a touching eloquence, attest the variety, the catholicity of his mind. In individual portraits, how many has he not added to the gallery of our recollections? Pelham himself, Mordaunt, Brandon, Mertoun Devereux, Bolingbroke, the Regent Orleans, Tarleton, the little sketch of the fatalist Desmarais, the Browns and Copperas, Isora, Isabel Mordaunt, Aram, the gipsies and pickpockets, of whom glimpses are given, beings drawn from every walk of life, imprint themselves, by characteristic traits, more than words, upon our memories." This is extravagant praise, and would now, we do not doubt, be considerably modified, especially in regard to Bulwer's style, which, in those earlier works at least, is not one which any schoolmaster would recommend. His imagination itself, though ambitious and daring, was always sluggish, never revealing the rapidity and vastness of the master-flights. must be admitted, however, that in almost all his books there is great subtlety of plot, and that he seldom resorts to absurd expedients to relieve himself from absurd predicaments, except, perhaps, when he knocks out a character's eyes with an umbrella, to account for a particular course of life, and makes others perpetrate assassinations by mistake!

"Eugene Aram" nevertheless attracted universal attention. Few people could withstand the curiosity prompting them to the painful ending. But the effect was nauseous. Hardly any can rise from the book without an oppression of regrets, which unconsciously and inevi-

tably reduce our detestation of the sins which worked the mischief. However, the interest it awoke was in itself a triumph. Its morals being open to question aroused great hostility, and even Thackeray, who never gilded vice or made it attractive by its humours, gave the writer some quiet cuts about his questionable ethics. No doubt his motive was pure, but it must be confessed he was too inexplicit in reprobating the crimes which his very wildness condoned.

"Lucretia, or the Children of Night," which came out in 1847, belongs to the same class of fiction. It was intended, like "Clifford," to illustrate the influence for evil of home education on life and character. Dealing in criminal investigation, tracing a heartless crime and sordid ambition into all its elaborate ramifications, the opportunity was again seized of impugning the morality he disseminated. This was the more unfortunate in the case of "Lucretia," seeing that its counterpoise, the "Caxtons"—bringing out with its many sweet pictures and agreeable diction the beneficence of home lifewas not published till two years afterwards, though a great part of it was already written. But it is, we think, only by the most tortuous reasoning that "Lucretia" can be interpreted into criminal incitement, for independent of crime itself, which can never be attractive to well ordered minds, the offences of "Lucretia" are visited by punishments terrible enough to prevent the repetition of such brutality. "Maltravers" is much more gross in this respect. In it, as a great though partial authority remarked, "something very like vice is made to look like a more than ordinarily ethereal virtue." But however much or however little truth lay in his assailants' criticism, the attack astounded Bulwer, who replied in a very spirited defence, "A Word to the Public," indignantly repudiating the accusation of lending "the weight of his name and authority to the defence and encouragement of crime." Leaving the anatomy of crime to less cultured surgeons, our author found a more congenial field for philosophic investigation in the domain of magic.

"Godolphin," in which two good female characters, Constance and Lucilla, occur, was published conjointly and anonymously with "Eugene Aram" in 1833, and proved by the warm welcome it received the power of the author in depicting with what facility pleasure conquers a poetic temperament.

After "The Pilgrims of the Rhine," first published with illustrations in 1833, had given English readers a taste of the tales and legends of the most picturesque part of Germany, Bulwer undertook the editorship of the New Monthly Magazine, in the chair of which he had been preceded by Thomas Campbell and Theodore Hook. Like other great geniuses he found editorial duties irksome and laborious, and relinquished them when a year and a half had expired.

To revive his energies after this fatigue he sojourned in Italy, and after visiting the Cathedral of Milan, revelling amid Venetian glories, and inspecting the endless beauties on the Arno, he settled himself in Rome and Naples to the composition of "The Last Days of Pompeii," which, describing the splendours of the classic age, with tits strange usages, modes of speech, amusements, systems, and institutions, and at the same time making the reader the confidant of a beautiful love tale, and the spectator of a magnificent catastrophe, involved society in the raptures of an immense sensation. Bulwer returned to London to see this book through the press, and then set off to Ireland, to begin "Ernest Maltravers" beside the Lakes of Killarney.

About a year after the publication of his first Italian novel, he completed "Rienzi," which he had begun on the occasion of his visit to the Eternal City, but postponed in favour of his "message" from the buried cities. In "Rienzi" he has been as successful in his portraiture of the Middle Ages, and the lingering relics of Roman pomp, as in his pictures of Pompeiian glory. It may be worth while to quote what a writer in the leading journal says in regard to this branch of his works: "If the 'Pilgrims of the Rhine' is tinted with local colour, the Italian historical romances are steeped in it. No wonder that a scholar, a poet, and a romancist like Lord Lytton could not tread the dust of mouldering Rome, or muse among the disinterred memories of the old city of Campania, without dreaming of making their past live again. . . . The sound archæology of 'The Last Days of Pompeii' is so thickly strewn with the flowers of fiction that visitors assume, as a matter of course, the genuine identity of the houses of Diomed and Glaucus, and give themselves up to the received illusion when the guide points out the rich forms of Julia impressed on the lava walls of the cellar where she had sought for refuge. . . . There was a whole epitome of a departed world in 'The Last Days of Pompeii,' while 'Rienzi' was but an episode in the long vicissitudes of Rome. Yet the episode was admirably selected for the author's purpose, and the proof of his power is that, as we suspect, he has permanently swayed the opinion of history as to the character of the tribune."

In 1835 Bulwer composed "Leila; or, the Conquest of Grenada," and "Calderon the Courtier," and—after attempting a history of Athens, left incomplete in consequence of Grote's masterly work—"Maltravers," in 1837 and 1838.

It is necessary here to take up another important thread in our author's somewhat complex web. About the time of his marriage he removed to Woodcote, a delightful retreat in the most secluded part of Oxfordshire, where for three years he pursued, with untiring zeal, his literary avocation; he then went to a house he purchased in Hertford Street, Mayfair, and there remained for some years; shifting eventually to the chambers at the Albany which had been occupied by Lord Byron and Lord Althorp. During the most active part of his parliamentary career he resided in Charles Street, Berkeley Square, and afterwards at a pretty villa at Fulham.

It was only natural to expect that the author of "Pelham," the descendant of a race illustrious for centuries in State affairs, should himself have aspired to the glories of Westminster. He very soon had an opportunity of joining in the frays of that exalted arena. On the introduction of the second Reform Bill he was chosen as the representative of St Ives in the Liberal interest, to which he continued true during the next ten years.

In 1841, having recommended his agricultural constituents to accept the compromise proposed by Lord John Russell of an eight-shilling duty, he lost his seat, and closed the first decade of his legislative experience, in the course of which he had shed new lustre on his name and done credit to Lincoln—for which he was returned in 1832. Perhaps the most important service he did as a politician was a famous pamphlet, called "A Letter to a late Cabinet Minister on the Crisis," in 1834, when Sir Robert Peel was summoned from Rome to form a new administration, on the occasion of Lord Althorp being raised to the peerage. The pamphlet ran through more than twenty editions in a few weeks; it became

the manual of the Melbourne party at the general election, and was said to have materially helped them back to office. "Yet," says a critic, "any inquirer who thinks it worth while to disinter an obsolete document, will find that the writer, instead of sharing the passions of his party, is chiefly concerned with the elaboration of antitheses and epigrams." Lord Melbourne's offer to the writer of a lordship in the Admiralty was declined, through a preference for literature and fear of misconstruction. The Prime Minister, however, did not forget the effect which the letter had wrought, and at the Coronation of the Queen, Bulwer received intimation of the royal intention to include him in a new creation of baronets, not for his political services, but as the representative of literature, along with Herschel as a man of science. The distinction was at once accepted as a tribute to the guild of which he was so accomplished a craftsman. His love of letters almost amounted to prejudice. In a poem written at thirty, he said—

> "I do confess that I have wished to give My land the gift of no ignoble name, And in that holier air have sought to live Sunned with the hope of Fame."

This honest aspiration he hoped to realize through the medium of letters; and versatile and radiant as he was, we may take it for certain that he will be known to posterity as Bulwer-Lytton, the novelist. Yet there was great variety about him. It was variety and roundness of parts that made him the giant he appears. In no department of literature was he a novice—none with which he had not, if not a familiarity, at least an acquaintance; and however slight the acquaintance, he always succeeded in carrying off a wreath. The

only thing in which he really failed was satire. For the select band who can damn with a word and raise with a smile, our author's style was much too elephantine. There was no keenness or brevity in it. Take the "Siamese Twins" (1831) for instance—an attempt at pasquinade deservedly a failure. Nor was his first essay at the drama in 1836, when his "Duchess de la Valliere" was produced-Macready taking the chief part—any better. The piece disappeared after the first fortnight. True, however, to the characteristics of himself and his creations, defeat never daunted him. The principles he preached he worked out, and realized the vainest dreams which Vanity ever whispered to the soul of Pelham. In 1838 therefore, after he had had a bout at history and fiction (ante, p. 243), and after the critics had predicted his failure as a dramatic writer, Bulwer handed "The Lady of Lyons" as the result of two weeks' work to Macready, who had undertaken the management of Covent Garden. The play—dedicated to the almightiness of love, illustrative of the wild ambitions which love may excite, even in market gardeners, and containing some pretty pictures, and much soporific creole sentimentalism—was stuffed with the fly-catchers of popularity, and had a tremendous run. The authorship was not formally acknowledged till a fortnight had elapsed, when, of course, the croakers were dumbfoundered at being once more made fools of. This success was followed up in 1839 by "Richelieu; or, the Conspiracy," and "The Sea Captain; or, the Birthright," afterwards amended and re-christened "The Rightful Heir," under which name it appeared at the Lyceum Theatre in 1869. Both pieces attained a fair measure of success; but their success was mere tolerance compared with the brilliant reception of the comedy "Money," brought out at the Haymarket in 1840. Having thus satisfied his resolve to succeed in what had been apportioned to him by the oracles as his bugbear, he laid aside the dramatic pen until 1851, when he wrote "Not so bad as we seem; or, Many Sides to a Character," for a distinguished company of strollers—Dickens, Foster, Jerrold, Mark Lemon, &c.—who with Bulwer had become dissatisfied with the administration of the Literary Fund, and resolved to establish "The Guild of Literature and Art"—homes for decayed hacks—at Stevenage, in Hertfordshire, on land given by the President, the subject of this memoir, and opened with brilliant speeches by him and Dickens in July 1865. His only other effort at the drama was as late as 1869, when he produced a comedy in three acts, "Walpole; or, Every Man has his Price."

His literary restlessness discovered a new quarry in 1841, when released from his toils at Westminster. Considering scientific literature to be urgently desiderated, he projected a *Monthly Chronicue* of science, politics, and general literature—Sir David Brewster and Dr Dionysius Lardner being associated with him in the design, and Sir Henry Bulwer (Lord Dalling) contributing the foreign articles. There being too thick an interlarding of science to suit the public taste, the undertaking had to be abandoned soon after its initiation.

The anxiety and labour incident on such a venture did not prevent him maturing one of his most popular fictions, "Night and Morning," which, with materials borrowed from the domestic life of the middle classes, was the pioneer of the pictures he so graphically limned in the Caxton series. It appeared in 1841.

In 1842 appeared "Zanoni." The composition of this book, the draft outline of which had been published in the *Chronicle* under the name "Zicci," is another

great mark in the mind of the writer, as well as a milestone among his books. It disclosed a new phase, not only of the author's genius, but of the genius of mysticism itself. Since the storm of obloquy which greeted his more ethical works from certain quarters, he had applied his mind to what was always a favourite theme for investigation—the possibilities of the great future, and the power of magicians to penetrate it. These inquiries, like the romances in which they resulted, had a mystical, moral, and theological bearing. As a mystic, he took more to the material than the spiritual side, or rather, if he had been in the place of his characters, he would have employed material means to pierce the secrets of the Beyond. Swedenborg, whom his generation thought a mere "elixir of moonbeams," but who was the greatest type of the spiritual mystic who has yet showed Atlantean breadth of power to the world, went through half a century's education in crucibles, mines, quarries, and workshops, and became learned in magnetism, astronomy, chemistry, and anatomy, before he attempted to teach his age the deep secrets of his ecstacies. He thought his science and spiritual illumination enabled him to invert others' existence by disclosing the museum and library and laboratory of his own life to their acceptance, and thus render experience unnecessary to their perfection. Lytton's mysticism was more of a deduction from extensive reading. His astrology was all gathered from the books of the craft, and he constructed a poet's theory out of it. The arts of the magicians were dim gropings after an unattainable science. Lytton followed them in their groping, and took no advantage of the superior facilities of a later century to prosecute their exact knowledge, after which the occult skill of astrologers and Rosicrucians were

but vain grubbings. Yet the result is pretty much the same, for the Swede believed he became a seer through much learning and a pure life; and Lytton's Rosicrucian is represented as mastering the secrets of being by

achieving purity and spiritual perfection.

"Zanoni" is embellished with many passages of striking beauty, a vast range of curious knowledge and science, which must always excite the restless curiosity, not to say eeriness, of sensitive and imaginative readers. It was a favourite with the author. Magic and the correlative sciences were a hobby as well as a study with him. He dedicated the work to John Gibson, the sculptor, saying, "I, artist in words, dedicate to you, artist whose ideas speak in marble, this well-loved work of my mature manhood." The fascination which mysticism had for him amounted almost to self-delusion, latterly to credulity. He wished to impart reality to magic as far as public gullibility would allow; but there was a redeeming feature in the symbol as well as the purity of the design, both of this work and of "A Strange Story" (published in 1862, after having appeared in the pages of All the Year Round); for any secret powers which his mystics had, were the rewards and the emblems of a conquest of themselves.

His designs were invariably blameless. Even his historical novels, "The Last of the Barons" (1843), and "Harold" (1848), were written—the latter at a heat on his return from the glories of Switzerland, where he had tried to drown his sorrows on the loss of his only daughter-to see how far a reliable narrative and accurate dates could be woven into romance, the only gilding being in the scenes and the converse. Having published the "Caxtons" in April 1848, and finding home-pictures singularly welcome among those who had looked only for historical or criminal romance from his pen, it became his purpose to hew out some really seemly blocks from this latest found vein. Travelling through the Tyrol, therefore, still bent on banishing the wearing memories of his bereavement, he perfected the plot of "The Varieties of English Life," to which he gave the preferential title, "My Novel." It was at Nice, in the winter of 1849, that he commenced this huge undertaking, which, but for his prodigious capacity for labour, could never have been sustained with such interesting detail and scholarship—superficial though it be—through four long volumes. It is generally allowed that in this great novel, probably the most full, rounded, and complete in the whole range of contemporary fiction, Bulwer's powers culminated. The variety of characters, the genuine force and vividness with which they are presented, the enchanting views of rural scenes and powerful pictures of town life, and his commanding grasp of statesmen, hangers-on, money-lenders, &c., awoke great interest and enthusiasm, and called forth general praise; a welcome which was repeated, though in more measured degree, when "What will He do with it?" by Pisistratus Caxton, appeared, also in four volumes, a few years later. These last tales appeared originally month by month in Blackwood's Magazine, with which Bulwer formed a connection in 1839, when he contributed translations of some of Schiller's Ballads—a connection which was only broken by death. He had qualified himself for the work of translation by devotion to German literature for a season, after losing his seat in 1841, living at Worms, Darmstadt, and Heidelberg for that purpose. He not only acquired a thorough acquaintance with the language, but collected information about Schiller, one of his favourites, which he embodied in the memoir prefixed to his translations.

Between 1840 and 1850 he spent the most of his laborious leisure between Hertfordshire, London, and the Continent. In December 1843, on the death of his gifted mother, who looked with a mother's pride on the increasing fame of her sons, and the rising fortunes of her house, her estates devolved on Edward, who according to the conditions of her will assumed the name Lytton. He had thus to bestow considerable time on the management of large possessions—a grateful employment to this gentleman, who never let anything cloud the consciousness of his blood, or interfere with the customs or the duties of his rank. A great sorrow, however, was soon to overtake him, in the death of his only daughter on 29th April, 1848. His health was never very robust, and this distracting bereavement, it may be assumed, did it no good. Indeed, in his "Confessions of a Water Patient" (1845), while facetiously describing the hydropathic regulations he submitted himself to, he complains very much of a weakness which was like to have prostrated him; he was only enabled to husband his strength by resorting to the diversions and delights of travel amid the romance and languor of the Italian lakes, the grandeur of Switzerland, and the frivolity of German spas. A great deal of the fictions last commented upon were framed in the course of these peregrinations. Viewing the mere bulk of his work, one is surprised that he should have found time for such recreation and travel amidst his indefatigable labour; and it is still more surprising to know that even at his busiest seasons he seldom spent more than a few hours at his desk each day. He saved much time, however, by his method and thrift, of which we find a notable example in the fact that many of his translations from Schiller were done in his carriage between Knebworth and London; and yet they have been pronounced by Carlyle as the version English readers should consult.

In 1852 a check was put upon his foreign tours. had addressed "A Letter," which went through ten editions, to "John Bull, Esq.," expounding the changes through which the country had passed since he sat at Westminster, and the development in his opinions which led him to embrace Conservatism as his political creed. His toryism, it may be remarked, was never of a very rabid type. He was never bitter as a partisan, nor pert as an official. The courtesy with which his nature was engrained made anything but an urbane and obliging port impossible. Thus when the Conservatives went into office in 1858, the selection of Sir E. Bulwer-Lytton as Secretary of State for the Colonies by Lord Derby was extremely popular, and he obtained the applause and retained the favour of the public during his year of power, not only by his engaging manners and agreeable person, but by some public services—the abolition of the Hudson's Bay Company monopoly, the constitution of British Columbia into a colony, the separation of Queensland from Sydney-which at a time when the Colonial office was not of very great moment, may be fairly described as important. After the accession to power of Lord Derby's third administration in July 1866, he was raised to the peerage as Baron Lytton of Knebworth.

It has been the custom to speak of his parliamentary abilities as of the highest order. And it is incontrovertible that, so far as social capabilities—always important adjuncts to the higher powers of the statesman—are concerned, this was quite the case. With his suavity and free, full, and flowing deportment he had the charge which could penetrate the most rigid circles. He was a man of fashion from the first; and his celebrity as an

author overcame all opposition which courtesy left unconquered. A lion, he was bowed to; a dandy, he was fondled. But independent of these advantages and the irresistible circumstance of high birth, he was a prudent politician, who did not allow the heat of his convictions to batter down even the outposts of polish; above all, he could attractively converse. At the same time it must not be imagined he was an orator. Nor had he the endowments necessary for a great statesman. Even the gentleness of his nature was a drawback in exalted stations, where firmness and decision are essentials of success. The slowness and conscientiousness of his decision were of a piece with the tardiness and cumbrousness of his speech, especially when called upon for a sudden display. His oratory was brilliant because it was artificial; he had not the flow of words, the trooping thought, the wit, the epigram, the warmth, or the spontaneity of the easy and accomplished orator. The hearer felt that he spoke in costume, as all his characters do. He did not carry conviction, or storm the mass with any agitative power. Still he won not a few parliamentary triumphs, particularly on the subject of reform, the abolition of the imposts on newspapers, ministerial reforms, the suppression of the Canadian revolt, the emancipation of the West Indian Slaves, the maintenance of our Colonial empire, the Irish Coercion Bill, and the Corn Laws, the repeal of which, as the Liberal representative of Lincoln, he strenuously opposed.

There was indeed no greater treat in Parliament than to hear Lytton, and especially Bulwer, run-off a prepared harangue; and any one who takes up his "Speeches" at this day will be surprised to find in ephemeral political discourses such an array of polished diction, acute reasoning, and pretentious platitude. With such pro-

ductions before us, which the Lord Chief-Justice described as models not only of deep thought, but of the highest and noblest eloquence, it was no wonder that he builded himself a reputation as one of the orators of his day. Like his poetry, however, it was more the result of hard work than the efflux of genius.

He believed that he was a poet and a scholar. Certainly he had more claim to the honours of poesy than the renown of scholarship, or humour, or philosophy. It was his aim and his work to excel in each of those departments. He said at Edinburgh that his first poem was a failure, and that his first drama, "The Duchess," narrowly escaped being damned. It was only his careful elaboration that produced any tolerable pieces. Probably his best piece, apart from some transcendental bouquets in his dramas, is the poem "Milton," the first sketch of which appeared in 1826, in "Weeds and Wild Flowers." It was retouched and enlarged for the purpose of being appended to the "Siamese Twins" in 1831, and again improved for the collected edition of his poems. Then he published a volume of poems, "Eva and the Ill-omened Marriage," in 1842; but it did not strike the public or disturb the reigning minstrels, any more than did the epic "King Arthur" (1849), most of which he wrote at Gastein. "The New Timon," a satire in the heroic measure, published anonymously between 1845 and 1847, attracted more notice, on account we should say of its lugging-in public men for some of its ill-humours. The attack on Tennyson has been again and again repeated, and we may embellish our pages with the duel, if only for the sake of literary curiosity:-

 [&]quot;Not mine, not mine (O Muse forbid!) the boon
Of borrow'd notes, the mock-bird's modish tune,
The jingling medley of purloined conceits
Out-babying Wordsworth, and out-glittering Keats;

Where all the airs of patchwork pastoral chime To drown the ears in Tennysonian rhyme!

2. "Let school-miss Alfred vent her chaste delight On 'darling little rooms so warm and light;' Chant 'I'm a-weary' in infectious strain, And catch the 'blue-fly singing i' the pane;' Though praised by critics and adored by Blues, Though Peel with pudding plump the puling muse, Though Theban taste the Saxon purse controls, And pensions Tennyson while starves a Knowles."

These were the more stinging lines, and Tennyson, it need hardly be said, did not relish them; but he took Timon by the ear and gave him this good shaking in *Punch*:—

- "We know him out of Shakspeare's heart And those full curses which he spoke; The *old* Timon, with his noble art, That strongly loathing, greatly broke.
- "So died the old; here comes the new.

 Regard him: a familiar face;

 I thought we knew him; what, it's you,

 The padded man that wears the stays.
- "Who killed the girls and thrilled the boys, With dandy pathos when you wrote;
 O Lion! you that made a noise,
 And shook a mane en papillotes.
- "And once you tried the Muses too,—
 You failed, Sir, therefore now you turn;
 You fall on those who are to you
 As captain is to subaltern.
- "But men of long-enduring hopes,
 And careless what the hour may bring,
 Can pardon little would-be hopes,
 And Brummels when they try to sting.

"An artist, Sir, should rest in Art, And waive a little of his claim; To have a great poetic heart, Is more than all poetic fame.

"But you, Sir, you are hard to please,
You never look but half content;
Nor like a gentleman at ease,
With moral breadth of temperament.

"And what with spites, and what with fears,
You cannot let a body be;
It's always ringing in your ears—
They call this man as great as me.

"What profits now to understand
The merits of a spotless shirt—
A dapper boot—a little hand—
If half the little soul is dirt?

"You talk of tinsel! why, you see
Old marks of rouge upon your cheeks;
You prate of nature—you are he
That spilt his life upon the cliques.

"A Timon you! nay, nay, for shame;
It looks too arrogant a jest—
The fierce old man to take his name—
You bandbox! Off, and let him rest."

This was almost the only feud Lord Lytton ever had, and it is satisfactory to know it was not a lasting one. He had a clannish regard for all men of letters, and was jealous of the rights and privileges, not merely of authors, but of artists and actors, being on terms of friendship with most of the great ones. He presided at the farewell banquets given to Macready on his quitting the stage, and to Dickens when he left for America in 1867; and he wrote the life of Laman Blanchard, prefixed to the

works of that writer, published for the benefit of his family. Amongst his other services to literary men, may be mentioned his magnanimous unearthing of Ebenezer Elliot, the Corn Law rhymer, notwithstanding their antagonism in the matter of principle; and the "lifts" he gave Sheridan Knowles, Marryat, and Monckton Milnes by opportune encomiums.

His desire to excel in everything amounted almost to infatuation. Novelist, poet, dramatist, politician, and pamphleteer, he might well have been content to leave the deeper things of scholarship alone. Yet he was ambitious to be considered a scholar, and, says a cold critic, his "Athens may still be seen on dusty bookshelves." Nor was that his only attempt in the same direction. He wrote an account of the state of Europe at the accession of Her Majesty, which called forth the praise of M. Guizot, the French historian; and the scholar who adventures himself on the frothy field of his fiction will soon perceive that in archæology and science and general knowledge he was most curiously erudite, down to the paltry technicalities of a tailor's workshop. His learning, however, though immeasurably beyond any tyroistic gleanings, was still of a shallow and somewhat improvised order, except, perhaps, on the subject of magic. At the same time, it should not be forgotten that, like his political chief, Lord Derby, and Mr Gladstone, whom he appointed Lord High Commissioner of the Ionian Islands to establish the Protectorate there—an appointment chiefly made to retain the future leader of the Liberals in the Tory camp-like them he dabbled in classical translation, publishing, in 1869, a rendering of "Horace's Odes," with an essay on the genius of Horace.

As a worker Lord Lytton teaches a valuable lesson. It

is his unending work that we most admire. He was his relentless taskmaster for a full half century. Versatility, like genius, is invariably a gift; but Lord Lytton aimed at versatility as a thing that could be acquired; he aimed to appear a genius, and we are fain to say he succeeded. Success was his motto, stimulant, and reward. But his end was not to be gained without work; and so thoroughly imbued was he with this mania for work, or this mania for writing, that when the world supposed he was resting on his oars, or spending the dignified leisure of life's evening in repose, it was startled to find him unweariedly at his desk, as the author of "The Coming Race," "The Parisians," and "Kenelm Chillingly"—the latter two appearing in Blackwood about the time of his death. The writings we have not yet referred to were (excepting the "Lost Tales of Miletus," a collection of legends, &c.) mainly critical contributions to the reviews, such as: "A Review of the History of English Literature," "The Life and Genius of Goldsmith," "The Writings of Sir Thomas Browne," "Bolingbroke and the Times of Anne," "The French Revolution," "The Poet Gray," and "Young's Night Thoughts."

Whatever verdict posterity may pronounce, so laborious and amiable a career could not have been without numerous rewards. The popularity of his novels in his own day was only such as a genuine writer could have commanded. They have been produced in every European tongue; and it may be mentioned that for a nineteen years' run of the copyright Messrs Routledge paid him £30,000. Of the numerous honours conferred upon him, none perhaps was more dear to him than the being elected Lord Rector of Glasgow University for two terms, a double distinction which had been conferred only on the poet Campbell. His amiability and

knightliness would alone have made him popular. His manners were most loveable. Strong and upright in his convictions, animated by noble purposes, he displayed gentlemanly moderation and tact in all his doings. Ardent and zealous as well as honest minds are constantly betrayed into excesses of demeanour, or temper, or talk; but this perfect gentleman, ardent as in many things he was, never forgot himself. Then, nature assisted his blood in giving him the physical patent of nobility. The greatness of race was endogenous—it came outward. He had a good front, if not a commanding stature; and in this respect, as Behmen would have observed, his body was the representative of his soul and mind.

Like Thackeray and Dickens he died in harness, but unlike them he had finished his work. He had as a medical authority remarked, for many years been the subject of a discharge from the ear, probably attendant on disease of the bone. Until shortly before his death. however, he enjoyed remarkably good health for so indifferent a constitution. In January 1873 he had gone to Torquay, where he was engaged revising the proof-sheets of "Kenelm Chillingly," when on the 16th of that month acute pain in the ear and head set in, and continued for a day or two, when unconsciousness supervened, and he died, "peaceful and painless," on the 18th, in his sixty-sixth year, in the arms of his distinguished son-once known in literature as Owen Meredith, and now Her Majesty's representative in India.

We have thus arrayed, with the brevity which limited space exacts, the leading features of a full, ornate, and successful career. Lord Lytton will have the gratitude of posterity as he had the popularity of contemporaries. He is captious indeed who would have withheld from this patrician—this descendant of Tudors and Plantagenets, who chose letters for his lot, whose "foot was always in the arena," whose "shield hung always in the lists"—the last and perhaps the greatest honour his country could bestow—a resting-place among kings and knights of the pen and sword, in the chapel of Edward the Confessor.

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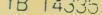
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